

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL  
STUDENTS' ACADEMIC SUCCESS: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

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AN ABSTRACT

of the dissertation of Sanjeev Shrestha for the degree of *Masters of Philosophy in Educational Leadership* presented on 7 May 2023, entitled *Exploring the Role of Parental Involvement in School Students' Academic Success: A Narrative Inquiry*.

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The idea for the research topic "*Exploring The Role of Parental Involvement in School Students' Academic Success: A Narrative Inquiry*" came from the experiences and the stories of my childhood friend and a domestic worker at my home. The purpose of my study was to explore the role that parental involvement plays in the students' academic success.

I selected three secondary level students as participants from one of the reputed public schools of Lalitpur district. Applying narrative inquiry and adopting an interpretive paradigm relating to my ontological, epistemological and axiological stance, I collected information via the participants' narratives. For the theoretical foundation of the research, I substantiated Epstein's Framework of parental involvement, Noddings' Theory of Care and Bourdieu Social Capital Theory and Cultrual Capital Theory. These theories were used as parallels of my research which enabled me to think analytically and encouraged me to act reflectively throughout the entire research journey.

Furthermore, I got various insights from my research participants on parental involvement in their education. Based on my participants' stories, I have presented findings into four themes. First and foremost, parental involvement is directly associated with children's academic success. When parents involve themselves in their children's learning environment, these children are likely to value their study. Secondly, regardless of the parents' ability to involve themselves in their children's learning, shaping a child's mindset towards education through better care and nurture

can leave a lasting impression and motivate them to perform better in school. Next, as in all the aspects of learning, effective communication between parents and children plays a crucial role in promoting academic success. Finally, this research indicated that in the context of low-income families, the socioeconomic status of the parents and the learning environment at home are secondary to the care and concern provided by the parents. To conclude, parental involvement is strongly linked to children's learning achievement, regardless of economic or educational barriers. Children who have parents involved in their learning environment are more likely to value their education and have improved self-esteem. Effective communication between parents and children is also crucial for academic success. In low-income families, parental care and concern for their children's education is more important than socioeconomic status or the learning environment at home.

The findings of this study will provide valuable insights to parents, teachers, and policy makers to understand the implication of parental involvement in children's education. As the information collected is based on the individual experiences and perspectives of the participants, it cannot be generalized to all parents. Nevertheless, the findings may be useful for school administrators, educators, and parents to gain insight into the perspectives on parental involvement in their child's learning.

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This dissertation titled Exploring the Role of Parental Involvement in School Students' Academic Success: A Narrative Inquiry presented by Sanjeev Shrestha on 7 May 2023.

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation has not been submitted to any candidate for any degree.

.....

7 May 2023

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## DEDICATION

With sincere gratitude and warm regards, I would like to dedicate this work to my respectful parents and my wife who have been part of my life and without whose support this journey would not have been possible. A special dedication to my facilitators of KUSOED.

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Lastly, my utmost gratitude to my family, especially my parents and my spouse. Their confidence in me has sustained my enthusiasm and upbeat attitude throughout this process. Without their unwavering love and care, completing this study journey would not have been feasible.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with an articulation of my research agenda. In doing so, I have presented my reflection briefly on the issue I have highlighted. Similarly, this chapter also discusses on the statement of problem and purpose of the study. Then I have framed the research questions to set my research to the desired direction which is followed by the rationale of the study. Finally, this chapter ends with delimitations of my study.

#### **Articulation of My Research Agenda**

I was born in Biratnagar, Morang, in a middle-class family. My family could afford to send me in a private school. I was privileged to join one of the renowned schools of the city and studied there up to Grade 4 as the topper of my grade. As my father was a Senior Officer in Guthi Sansthan, he got transferred to the Central Office, Kathmandu. Because of this, I got an opportunity to start my Grade 5 from Kshitiz Secondary English Boarding School, Dillibazar, a private school again. To ease my commute to the school, my family decided to rent a flat near Maitidevi chowk. This new neighborhood was interesting as I was going to get accustomed to my Kathmandu-life. Unlike Biratnagar, I found this city bustling. However, this city accepted me soon. This acceptance was also due to a new comrade from my neighborhood. He was Raju (pseudo name). He was enrolled in a public school located at Dillibazar. Although we went to different schools, we would spend time together whenever we were out of schools. We always played together during our holidays and sometimes did our homework together. Despite our likeness and comraderie, we were different in our academic performances. I used to be a class topper every year till my School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination. But my friend, Raju, an average student, always struggled to pass every exam.

Raju's disappointment was heart wrenching for me. At times, he would show his frustration about his life. He wanted to do better in his study; however, he always complained about his parents. Raju had the view that he could do well in his study had he got support from his parents and siblings. He always complained that neither his parents bothered about his study and academic performance nor his siblings supported him in home assignments. He was alone. When I compared my situation

with him, I felt lucky for getting full support from my father during school days. I always went to private schools both in Biratnagar and Kathmandu. After SLC, I got back to my hometown, Biratnagar and enrolled in 10+2 Science. Since then, my meeting with Raju thinned. We rarely met.

Later I came to know that Raju dropped his school while he was doing his Grade 12. Knowing this, I wanted to meet him and went to his house. There we discussed our days down the memory lane. I also shared how happy I was when I got him as a friend when I was completely new in Kathmandu. After spending some hours, I asked him why he did not continue his plus two-level education. In reply, with a big sigh, he shared that he was forced to work and earn money. His family did not understand his willingness to complete his education. He added that he never got any family support to continue his education. He blamed that his parents never took interest in his studies.

After returning home, I compared my situation with Raju. I was very sad for him and his trajectory made me question if dropping from his study was his individual fault or was it his family who were unable to support him since his primary schooling or was it due to his public school background? I placed myself in place of Raju. If Raju was born in my family and I was born in his family, would I drop out my studies like Raju? This question impelled me to ponder why students with poor economic condition are forced to leave their study? Why do not parents help and support their children to get proper education. However, I also realized that there were many students who belonged to similar families like Raju's. They went to public schools and graduated from there. Later they joined university level and did well in their life. They did not choose or were forced to leave their schools. In this sense, did their families support and proper care motivated them despite of financial constraints?

I feel fortunate to think of my education, that I could be a part of Kathmandu University's MPhil in Educational Leadership program in 2019 as it helped me understand the alarming educational scenario of Nepal. Raju's case triggered me to understand the situation of how students like him were forced to leave their education though they could do better in their study provided that they were given the opportunity.

However, another case gave a reason why I was determined to conduct this research. Fifteen years ago, we had a domestic worker at our home. Her name was Khusbu (Pseudo) and she was sixteen years old at the time she came to us as a

worker. I helped her enroll in Grade 5 in a public school at Bhaktapur. At first, I was unbeknownst about her study and thus cared least about it. Time passed and she reached Grade 10. This was her important year at school as she was appearing for Secondary Education Examination (SEE), formally known as School Leaving Certificate (SLC). Unfortunately, she failed the exam. Because of this, she was frustrated. Even I felt bad for her. So, I motivated her to continue her study. I also talked to her teachers and requested for their attention and care for her. As she was convinced to repeat Grade 10, I started giving attention to her study hours. She also told me that she found Mathematics tough and needed to take tuition classes and I also managed that for her. In addition, my family members also showed their interest on her study and eased her household chores during her examinations. As a result, she passed her Grade 10 board exam with 2.70 GPA. After this, she was motivated to study further and continued her Grade 11 in another public school. Ultimately, she graduated from Grade 12 and returned to her hometown to reunite with her family. In a way, our care and support helped her perform well in her academic duty.

As I compared Khusbu's case with Raju's, I strongly felt that the latter's future would be different if he had got the opportunity to study like Khusbu. Any support and care from his family would encourage him to further his study as argued by Amatea and West (2007). Henderson and Mapp (2002) also revealed that Parental Involvement in children's education is a key predictor of academic success, regardless of the family's socioeconomic status.

Our family's involvement proved to be vital in improving Khusbu's academic performance. Through this particular case, I realized when parents or guardians are involved in students' learning, they could excel in their academics. Like I mentioned previously, there were also students who belonged to families with low economic status. Despite these challenges, they did well in their study and took it to a height. In this context, some questions came in my mind. How do parents and families contribute to their academic success of their children? Are they similar to what my family and I did for Khusbu? How was this role played by parents in other families? How do parents from economically deprived families participate in their children's study? Do their engagement enable them to better their study? These questions were hovering in my mind for a long time. I always wanted to conduct a research on this topic where I could make conclusion and forward implication to understand the situation.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Parents have a crucial role in their children's academic success, similar to teachers. A lack of parental involvement can lead to decreased student motivation to achieve academic goals. If parental involvement is not well-understood or supported, there may be missed opportunities to enhance student outcomes. Consequently, parents may find it challenging to offer guidance and support, resulting in their children feeling uncertain and lacking direction in their academic pursuits. The necessity for parental involvement in their children's learning has recently become more apparent on a global scale, and several studies have supported this. According to Bhusal (2018), studies on parental supports for students' academic achievement have been emphasized for the last two decades in Nepal. Nonetheless, only limited studies have been conducted in parental involvement in Nepal. Without a better understanding of how to support parental involvement, it may be difficult to close these gaps. This can lead to subpar academic performance and diminished long-term prospects of school children.

Researchers worldwide have extensively studied and debated the role of parents in their children's academic success. Studies such as Xiong et al. (2021), Toldson and Lemmons (2013), and Okado et al. (2014) have established a connection between parental involvement and their children's academic excellence. They have demonstrated that parental involvement positively influences students' academic achievement and is a crucial factor in their overall school success. These studies, conducted across different age groups and regions have shown that parental involvement can take various forms such as: monitoring and supervising their children's academic progress; providing academic support and resources; communicating regularly with teachers and school staff; and promoting a positive attitude towards education and learning.

On the contrary, most of these studies were carried out with a positivist paradigm and were unable to explore the ground reality from the perspective of the students. Additionally, among these research works, very few have studied how parents play role in academic success of students who are particularly from lower socio-economic status. Limited study on parental involvement could also contribute to wider achievement gaps between different students groups, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Consequently, policymakers and education leaders need to understand the importance of parental involvement to make informed decisions

about educational policies and programs. Without adequate research, it may be more challenging to make effective policy decisions that support students' academic achievement.

To address this issue, I conducted a qualitative study using a narrative inquiry approach, which differs from previous research, as I tried to dig out the multiple realities from the perspective of students themselves. This study aimed to bring multiple realities through an extended engagement with participants and contribute fresh insights to leadership studies. Previous research mostly employed quantitative approaches without exploring the grounded reality. Those done in the qualitative approaches are also from the perspective of parents and/or teachers only. Therefore, there is a need for more qualitative research to better understand how to support parents in their children's education and enhance students' academic achievement, especially for those who are forced to attend public schools due to economic constraints.

To summarize, the lack of research on parental involvement in the academic success of students in countries like Nepal could have a substantial effect on student outcomes, particularly for those whose parents cannot afford private schools. Therefore, it was crucial to conduct more research in this area to gain a better understanding of how to support parents in their children's education and enhance academic success.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to explore the role of parental involvement for academic success of the public school children. More specifically, this study aimed to explore the experiences and stories of parental involvement for academic success from the perspectives of the students.

### **Research Question**

Based on the purpose of this study, I developed the following research question:

How do students narrate the role of their parental involvement in their academic success?

### **Rationale of the Study**

With the questions revolving in my mind regarding the family support in my childhood friend's education and a domestic worker' education who were studying in public schools and also using my long-time experience in the education sector, I



conducted this study so that I could explore the multiple realities in regard to the parental involvement in children's education.

I believe my study can be an eye opener for addressing the importance of parental involvement in the academic performance of the public school children. Hence, this study aims to support the policymakers and education leaders need, to understand the importance of parental involvement to make informed decisions about educational policies and programs. This study also brought the multiple realities which could be unique and fresh contribution to leadership literature in adding an additional brick to the educational leaders.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

In terms of parental involvement, I delimited the study to parental engagement in children education, emotional support, learning environment at home and parental communication. For academic success, the study was delimited to the final results i.e. final GPA of the students and class rankings. Their parental involvement and their academic success were identified and explored.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter consists of review of some literatures related to this research. This chapter also covers the major themes like parental involvement and academic achievement of the school children. The related theories guided the research with a policy review, identification of the research gap and the preparation of research framework.

#### **Parental Involvement**

Parental Involvement is frequently considered to include involvement in school activities, showing up at PTA and SMC meetings, purchasing necessary school supplies for their kids, and volunteering at the institution. According to Baykusoglu (2014), regular and meaningful communication between parents and children that involves students' learning at home and various school activities is known as parental involvement. Similar to this, parental involvement includes sharing information, making decisions together, volunteering at the school, and working with educators to support student development (Morrison et al., 2011). The necessity for parental involvement in their children's learning has recently become more apparent on a global scale, and several studies have supported this.

When parents participate in the education of their children, they do it in various ways, which is also a component of parenting. "Parents' engagement in their children's education at home and parenting are two areas in which schools have less information (Newchurch, 2017, p. 99)". By attending parent-teacher meetings, supporting learning at home, volunteering at the school, and serving on the school management committee, parents may support the schools. Numerous research like Van De et al., (2019) and Segoe and Bisschoff (2019) on parental participation have found that children perform better when their parents are actively involved. Therefore, one of the most significant duties of parents is to provide an atmosphere where their child may thrive.

Numerous research studies on parental participation have found that children perform better when their parents are actively involved. As parents become more involved in the education process of their children, a positive reinforcement takes place. This increased involvement can expressively impact a child's academic

performance and overall well-being (Henderson & Map, 2002). “Students who feel that their parents care about their education tend to have higher self-esteem, earn higher grades and test scores, enroll in higher-level programs, be promoted, pass their classes, earn credits, attend school regularly, have better social skills, show improved behavior, adapt well to school and graduate to postsecondary education (Jacob, 2010, p. 77)”. When parents take time to understand what is happening in their children's lives, it makes a real difference. It sends the message to the child that their parents care about them, and are interested in their education. As Easton (2010) notes, when parents talk about school with their child, when they get involved, it matters. This increased communication and involvement can help to strengthen the bond between parent and child.

Educational researchers have long emphasized the importance of parental involvement in a child's academic success. Toldson and Lemmons (2013) stress, “Parental involvement is a key contributor to a student's academic achievement, while there is no specific definition of parental involvement, it has been defined in literature similarly (p. 238)”. According to Epstein et al. (2018), Parental Involvement is defined as “being involved with their children’s education and consistently demonstrating good parenting skills, communicating with the school staff, volunteering their time in school, helping their children learn at home, taking an active role in school-related decision making, and who regularly collaborate with the school community” (p. 462). Other research have also shown that parental involvement at an early age and continuous involvement in the education for their children can positively affect their academic performance (Okado et al., 2014). This is particularly true during the early years of education, when parental involvement can substantially and constructively impact a child's development and academic progress.

Parents and educators are aware of its importance, which is why educational scholars and leaders concur that parental involvement is essential for a child's academic achievement. According to Morales (2020), both parents and teachers acknowledge the significance of parental involvement in a child's educational journey. Regardless of their social class, race, or cultural background, parents always want the best for their children and frequently want to be active in their education (Vinson-Ondecko, 2021). Garris (2021) has also affirmed that parents do understand that they can play a vital role in their child's learning and development, and are often willing to provide support and guidance to help their children succeed.

In conclusion, parental involvement in a child's education is crucial for their academic success and overall well-being. Parental involvement includes various activities such as attending parent-teacher meetings, supporting learning at home, volunteering at the school, and serving on the school management committee. When parents are actively involved in their children's education, it strengthens the bond between parent and child and sends a positive message to the child that their parents care about them and their education.

### **Academic Performance**

Academic performance refers to the measure of how well students are achieving in their studies. This can include various aspects such as grades, test scores, and overall academic progress. Academic performance is often used as an indicator of the effectiveness of educational systems and the quality of education that students are receiving (York et al., 2015).

Academic performance can be measured in a number of ways. One of the most common methods is through the use of standardized test scores, such as the SAT or ACT (York et al., 2015). These tests provide a way to compare students' performance across different schools and states. Additionally, academic performance can also be measured through grades, which reflect a student's mastery of course material.

It is crucial to remember that academic success include non-cognitive elements like motivation, self-control, and self-esteem in addition to how well pupils are doing in their studies. Research has shown that these non-cognitive factors are important in determining academic success (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Additionally, socio-economic status (SES) also plays a crucial role in shaping academic performance (Sirin, 2015). Hence, academic performance is a multi-dimensional concept that can be affected by many different factors, like cognitive abilities, motivation, and socio-economic status.

In conclusion, academic performance is a vital measure of how well students are performing in their studies. It includes different aspects such as grades, test scores, and overall academic progress, and is frequently used to assess the effectiveness of educational systems. However, it is important to acknowledge that academic performance is not solely based on cognitive abilities and that non-cognitive factors such as motivation, self-control, and self-esteem can significantly influence academic success. Additionally, socio-economic status is also a crucial factor in shaping academic performance, as students from lower SES backgrounds may face additional

barriers to academic success. Ultimately, to support students' academic performance, it is necessary to consider a range of factors that contribute to their overall well-being and achievement.

### **Academic Success**

Learning is a dynamic and ever-evolving process shaped by the various elements in the environment surrounding an individual. It is a subtle yet profound shift in behavior that can be observed and measured. According to Piaget (1969), this change is brought about by the assimilation, accommodation and adaptation of new ideas and concepts. According to York et al. (2015), the definition of academic success is uncertain since it has an indistinct and vague identity, which varies based on subjective opinions. Academic success can be characterized by achieving high grades in assessments to demonstrate knowledge acquisition, but it can also encompass the ability of graduates to acquire a professional role to their degree.

Vygotsky (1978) further expounds on this idea by suggesting that every function in a child's cultural development is first manifested on a social level before the individual internalizes it. This implies that learning is not solely an individual endeavor, but is also shaped by the social interactions and relationships that an individual experiences. This viewpoint does not negate Piaget's theory but expands it by emphasizing the role of the social environment in shaping an individual's learning.

One significant aspect of the social environment that can profoundly impact an individual's learning is the socio-economic status (SES) of their parents. Research has shown that parental SES can play a decisive role in determining the resources and opportunities available to an individual, which in turn can influence their learning achievement and overall success in learning.

Learning achievement is a term used to describe the level of knowledge and skills that a student has acquired through their educational experience. Research has shown that there are several factors that can impact learning achievement, including a student's motivation, the quality of instruction, effective teaching strategies and parental involvement.

Pekrun et al. (2009) have found that students with a high level of motivation tend to have higher learning achievement than those with low motivation. The authors suggest that motivation can play a vital role in the learning process for students, and educators should aim to establish an environment that is both stimulating and motivating in order to enhance student engagement.

In a separate study featured in the *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Hattie (2009), has discovered that the level of instruction is a strong indicator of academic success. The author found that effective teaching strategies, such as feedback, can help improve student learning. The study suggests that teachers should focus on using evidence-based teaching practices to promote student achievement.

The involvement of parents is also essential to the academic success of students. Fan and Chen (2001) have revealed that parental participation in their child's education is positively linked to their academic performance. The authors suggest that parents should take an active role in their child's education by keeping track of their progress, giving them assistance, and communicating with their teachers.

In conclusion, a combination of factors including student motivation, quality of instruction, effective teaching strategies and parental involvement can impact student learning achievement. It is crucial for teachers to recognize these elements and to implement strategies to promote student motivation, effective teaching practices, and parent-school collaboration.

Hallak (1990) posits that education is one of the five key factors that contributes to the development of human resources, along with health and nutrition, the environment, employment, and political and economic freedom. It is seen that education is considered as a means to fulfill various human needs. The societal goals of education can be broken down into three categories: fostering positive human interactions, promoting economic productivity, and imparting knowledge of civic responsibilities. The attainment of education is significant not only for the individual's social standing but also for their occupational opportunities and income. Additionally, an individual's level of education can have a significant impact on the education level of their children (Teachman, 1987). "Research on the intergenerational transmission of educational achievement and mobility has shown that both the occupational status and educational attainment of a father have a positive effect on the educational outcomes of their children (Hauser & Wong, 1989)".

In a nutshell, academic success is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various elements beyond just grades or test scores. Factors such as motivation, self-control, self-esteem, and socio-economic status can significantly influence academic success. Additionally, learning is a dynamic process shaped by social interactions, relationships, and environmental factors. Therefore, to support students' academic success, it is necessary to consider a range of factors that contribute to their overall

well-being and achievement. Teachers, parents, and educational policymakers must work together to create an environment that fosters motivation, effective teaching strategies, and parent-school collaboration to help students achieve their full potential. Ultimately, academic success is not only essential for individuals' social and occupational opportunities but also for the development and progress of society as a whole.

### **Review of Previous Studies**

In support of my argument, I have collected findings from the related studies, the review of which has been presented below:

Rai (2019) has conducted a qualitative study in parental involvement and adolescents' learning in the private schools of Nepal. Her study was mainly focused towards the different perspectives of parents of private schools in understanding their involvement in the learning of their adolescent children. She presented her findings in three themes as parents' experience and aspirations supporting adolescents learning, parental trust in the learning of the adolescents and parental communication as a catalyst in the learning of their adolescents.

This study revealed that parents can bring the change in their child's life if they care enough to be involved in taking care of them. The finding also revealed that parents genuinely fulfilled their children's needs and involved in their education in various ways. Therefore, it is crucial for parents to recognize the significance of their involvement in their children's learning by being invested in their children's schooling, and in building their self-esteem and confidence. Findings also suggested that a household that encouraged active communication brought parents and children closer; thereby making the house environment lively and peaceful.

Further, a quantitative study by Bhusal (2018) has found that the level of parents' involvement in Nepal varies across their educational attainment and ethnic diversities. Parents' education and ethnic diversities have greater influence over children's learning achievement. Parental involvement for improving learning achievement of children is insufficient in public schools; as a result the desired educational outcome in the part of children has not been attained yet in community based schools of Nepal.

The conclusion of her study also stated that parental involvement is influenced by various components such as parents' qualifications, ethnicity and communication skills. Educated parents have more confidence to support children in educational

activities at home and in school. Such parents can communicate with schools about their children's academic growth. The ethnic diversity among the parents plays a contributive role in their children's learning. Ethnic minorities feel less confident contributing to children's performance in schools.

Newchurch (2017) has conducted a study in Georgia, USA, entitled "The Impact of Parental Involvement on Student's Success: School and Family Partnership from the Perspective of Parents and Teachers." The purpose of the study was to scrutinize the views of both parents and teachers concerning their cognizance and receptiveness to Parental Involvement, and to determine ways to enhance the connection between home and school via efficient parental engagement. The research was grounded on Epstein's six categorizations of PI with a specific emphasis on the influence of parenting and education at home on student achievement. The research was qualitative in nature and involved interviews with parents of fifth-grader students. Three themes emerged during the interviews, which were used to categorize the results. This study results highlighted the significance of parenting, learning at home, and communication in advancing student achievement and fortifying the collaboration between home and school.

In a similar study, Mishra (2010) has found that family and school are equally important for children's educational attainment. The learning performances of the children were related with the qualification and income of their parents and, also with the number of siblings they possess in the family.

Increased parents' qualification gives rise to better learning achievement of children. It has been possible due to the fact that parents are conscious in creating child learning friendly environment at home to the level of their qualification. Moreover, they contribute in shaping the school culture homogeneous to their children's learning level. This helps their children in acquiring education to desirable extent.

The income of parents is another critical factor which was shown in her study. Parents' income was directly related to their children's performance to fulfill their educational demand. Better income level of parents means better choices of schools, books and better learning environment at home.

The number of children in a family is another key factor of the family characteristics that redirects the children's learning achievement. Less number of children in the family helps to increase learning performance in the way that parents'



concentration and family resources get invested and accumulated to satisfy the aspiration of a focused child. Since the efforts of the family do not get dispersed, the children in such family get reinforced for the better learning achievement.

Tripathi (2008) has conducted a qualitative research in parental participation in teaching learning process of school children of Kathmandu district and found that most of the schools do not have policy and programs for involving parents in schools' teaching-learning process. However, the students felt the necessity of parental participation in their learning process for better performance. The parents' background such as educational level, social status, economic status and occupation/professional and schools' policy are the factors for parental participation in schools' teaching learning process.

In this context, Flemmings (2013) has conducted a qualitative study titled "Parental Involvement: A Study of Parents' and Teachers' Experiences and Perceptions in an Urban Charter Elementary School" at an Elementary School, New Jersey, USA. This research aimed to investigate the perceptions and experiences of both parents and educators regarding the association between school and home with a particular emphasis on transitioning from parental involvement to parental engagement. Given the school's concern about inadequate levels of parental involvement, the researcher aimed to explore obstacles and strategies to enhance parental engagement for student learning. The study employed Epstein's conceptual framework of PI in its analysis.

Five teachers and parents each were the participants of this study and the researcher employed phenomenology research method in this qualitative study. The participants were encouraged to take part in the research. The findings indicated that communication and teacher training programs were necessary to increase parental engagement and support student learning. The research emphasized that the implementation of communication, respect, collaboration and capacity building can facilitate the parents progression from involvement to their engagement.

Muhammed (2013) has carried out a study in Lahore, Pakistan among 150 male and female students of eighth grade of secondary schools and discovered that parental involvement has a considerable impact on the academic performance of their children. The study demonstrated that parental involvement improves their children's academic accomplishments.

Stevens (2007) carried out a case study titled "Parental Involvement in Two Elementary Schools: A Qualitative Case Study", which aimed to investigate the degree of parental engagement in two elementary schools of the Southern Appalachian in USA. The study employed a qualitative methodology, and included interviews with parents, school administrators and an elementary school counselor to collect their perceptions of parental involvement. To increase the validity of the study, relevant documents such as school improvement plans, newsletter and websites of schools were also analyzed, in addition to observations of participants.

The study participants were selected using criterion sampling, which included 15 parents, 2 school principals, 1 former principal, and 2 guidance counselors. The research aimed to investigate the methods used by the two elementary schools in regards to increasing parental involvement, identifying successful techniques of highly engaged parents at the two schools, and identifying obstacles to parental involvement. The data collected was analyzed using grounded theory, with the primary method being the constant comparative method to identify similarities and differences between the two schools.

A majority of parents concurred that their children valued their participation in school activities, but also acknowledged that their children would still excel regardless of their involvement. The study also revealed that parents believed it was important to communicate with both their children and the school. Some highly involved parents noted that their level of involvement had decreased as their children progressed to higher grades, and no longer required direct assistance with homework or other assignments. A noteworthy finding from the study was the perspective shared by the former principal, who emphasized the importance of consistent parental involvement in a child's development, rather than just being present at the school.

A comprehensive review conducted by Jaiswal and Choudhari (2007) of the empirical studies has come to the conclusion that previous research on the connection between parenting practices and children's academic performance have highlighted several important concepts, such as parental involvement at home, parents participation in school events, communication and monitoring with children, parenting style and educational expectations. "These studies imply that when parents are actively involved in their children's education, express affection to their children, participate in school events, have a democratic and responsive parenting style, and

maintain positive educational expectations, students have a tendency to perform better academically” (Jaiswal & Choudhari, 2007, p. 117).

“Both home and school-based PI are positively associated with academic performance. Home-based involvement strategies, such as monitoring homework or assisting with it, have shown to have a fluctuating association with educational success when compared to other forms of home-based engagement” (Jaiswal & Choudhari, 2007, p. 118). Conversely, engagement in school-centered activities, such as volunteering, visiting the school, and participating in school events, have been realized to have a positive influence on academic performance. However, the strength of this association seemed to be weakened as students’ progress from the elementary to upper school level.

Washington (2011) has conducted a quantitative study in Michigan, USA, titled "A National Study Of Parental Involvement: Its Trends, Status, and Effects On School Success”, and her study employed analysis of multiple rounds of secondary data gathered by the “National Center for Education Statistics” (NCES) and “School and Staffing Surveys” (SASS). A variety of statistical techniques, including descriptive statistics, discriminant function analysis, and logistic regression were employed in the research. The study findings revealed that PI in public schools has increased over time and that it can have both beneficial and detrimental effects on schools, depending on the specific areas of involvement.

Her study suggests that while parental involvement is significant, it is also essential to consider various ways parents can be involved in their children's education. For instance, parents who are actively involved in their children's home and school activities, such as volunteering at the school or attending school events, may positively impact their academic performance. On the other hand, involvement focused on monitoring and controlling the child's education without providing support may negatively impact their learning.

Coleman Report is termed as one of the milestones in government level survey in the USA. In 1965, James Coleman and his team conducted one of the largest social science surveys ever (Dickinson, 2016). The research was regarding the performance of the public school education in the USA. This was a government level research assigned to James Coleman, where he had to submit the report to the then President of USA, Lyndon Johnson. The survey aimed to address the issue of unequal access to educational opportunities based on race, color, religion, or national origin in public

educational institutions. At the time, there was limited knowledge about the state of America's schools and the distribution of funding and resources was unclear. At the time, there had been no research conducted to examine the crucial elements for successful learning. Rather than focusing solely on the resources and funding provided to schools by the government, Coleman aimed to understand the results.

The study led the team to the conclusion that the most significant predictor of a child's academic performance was not the school's facilities or resources, but the child's home life and family. Coleman emphasized that, overall, the most crucial variable in a child's performance, both inside and outside of school, is their family's educational background. The research results also suggests that a child's performance, particularly that of working-class children, is greatly improved by attending school with students from diverse backgrounds. Coleman said, "If you integrate children of different backgrounds and socioeconomics, kids perform better."

It has been well-established conclusion for half a century that one's family background plays a significant role in one's academic outcomes and Coleman and his team were among the first to demonstrate this. Unfortunately, many proposed changes and studies neglect to take this fact into account. It was the Coleman Report which was first to claim this with evidence with the help of which policymakers have been able to make the effective use of it in the betterment of public schools education of USA.

To summarize, the literature review highlights the importance of parental involvement in their children's education and parenting, as it positively affects academic performance. Parental involvement at an early age and continuous involvement can lead to better academic performance. Furthermore, parents' education and ethnicity also influence their children's learning achievement. Communication, respect, collaboration, and capacity building can help parents become more engaged in their children's education. Parents who are actively involved, express affection, participate in school events, and have positive educational expectations tend to have children who perform better academically. Ultimately, the child's home life and family have a greater impact on their academic performance than the resources available at school. However, most of the schools and other concerned authority lack studies about this area. In context of Nepal, public schools have insufficient parental involvement, leading to poor educational outcomes.

In a nutshell, I have found very few literature in the context of public schools of Nepal. As discussed above, numerous research conducted in the developed nations like USA have highlighted the need of parental involvement in the academic success of the school children. Educators have also raised this concern in the above studies. Above literature of Nepal also highlighted the need of parental involvement from the perspective of parents and educators while very few have touched upon this issue with the qualitative lens. Some have shown the relationship of various factors of parental participation and academic success of the students using quantitative methods. Realizing a clear contextual and methodological gap, this research is necessary to dig out the multiple realities of parental involvement of my participant students, who are from the low socio-economic families and are studying at public school.

### **Theoretical Referents**

Theory essentially is a key component to research which gives a mental picture that helps in understanding something that can't be seen or experienced directly. Since theories are established to suggest applications of practical values, I have attempted to ascertain the kind of theories that were useful in understanding parental involvement and academic success of school children.

### **Epstein's Framework of Parental Involvement**

Epstein's framework of parental involvement on pupils' performance best fits my research. Epstein et al. (2002) have proposed that there are six distinct categories of involvement interactions that can be used as a framework for understanding the actions, responsibilities, and activities of school staff, families, and community members that contribute to increased involvement and improved student achievement. These six categories are defined and further explained below.

First is parenting, which involves providing support and resources that enable parents and other family members to be knowledgeable about child development and to create a home environment that promotes learning. Parenting encompasses the various actions and initiatives taken by parents to raise children who are all-rounded, healthy and successful students. While teachers play a vital role in a child's life, parents have a lifelong commitment to their children. To foster this type of involvement, parents are provided with information and support regarding their child's growth, well-being, safety, and home environment that can foster learning. This can come in the form of parent education, family support programs that provide assistance with health, nutrition and other necessities, and home visits during significant

transitional periods such as elementary, middle, and high school (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017).

The second component, communicating-effective, is focused on the appropriate exchange of information between families and schools regarding school events, student's academic or personal development and progress, and/or understanding of the home environment. A key component of the partnership between families and schools is communication. Schools and families communicate with one another through a variety of channels, such as sending flyers and messages home about significant occasions, sharing health and educational background information with instructors, and using the school website as a communication tool. This entails holding annual meetings with each parent, offering language translation services to families as required, keeping a consistent schedule of informative notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters, and other forms of communication (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017).

Similarly, the third aspect is volunteering, which means organizing and being a part of activities, both those that are initiated by school officials like parent-teacher groups and community organizations, as well as those that are created by community members, in order to support students and school programs, such as service-learning initiatives and assemblies aimed at reducing violence. Volunteering is the act of recruiting and arranging assistance and support from parents for school programs and student activities. There are three main ways in which individuals can participate in volunteering in education: by assisting teachers and administrators as tutors or assistants in the school or classroom; by offering their time to support the school such as raising funds for an event or promoting the school in the community; or by attending school programs or performances as a member of an audience (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). One approach to involve volunteers in a school or classroom setting is to establish a program that offers support to educators, administrators, pupils, and other parents. This could involve designating a specific area or center for volunteer activities, meetings, and resources for families. Additionally, conducting an annual survey via postcard could help to identify the skills, availability, and preferred locations of volunteers.

The fourth component is "learning at home", which encompasses the idea of providing parents and families with information about school processes such as homework opportunities, grading criteria etc. to help them assist their children's

academic activities. According to Epstein & Sanders (2006), one aspect of parental involvement in education includes providing families with the tools and information necessary for them to assist their children with homework and other curriculum-related activities and decisions. This can take the form of parents helping their children with schoolwork or taking them on educational excursions such as museum visits. These initiatives urge parents to engage with the school curriculum and develop a home culture that is focused on education. Parents may learn about what their children are learning in the classroom and how they can help with homework through activities that encourage learning at home. This entails informing families about the abilities needed for students at each grade level in all subjects, homework policies, and techniques for supervising and discussing schoolwork at home, as well as involving families in the annual goal-setting for students and the preparation for higher education or job (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017).

The fifth component is decision-making, wherein parents and members of families from various backgrounds serve as leaders and representatives on school committees and agree on the educational activities. Parents participate in decision-making via establishing parent leaders and representatives. When parents join groups like the parent-teacher association or school governance committees, they participate in decision-making at their children's schools. Taking on leadership responsibilities that entail informing other parents is another activity that involves making decisions. A parent-teacher association or other parent organization that is active is one example of this. Other examples include advisory councils or committees for parent leadership and participation, independent advocacy groups to promote school improvement and reform, and networks that link all families with parent representatives (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017).

Collaboration with the community, the final component, is locating and incorporating resources from the community in order to assist and cater to the requirements of school staff, students, and their families. In order to assist and improve schools, students, and their families, collaboration with the community involves locating and utilizing the community's resources and services. Information on community resources including health, cultural, recreational, and social support programs and services, as well as information on community activities that relate to acquiring skills and abilities, including summer programs for students, are part of this (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017).

As this study was focused towards the students from the low socio-economic who are studying in public schools of Nepal, the three components of the Epstein's Framework; parenting, communicating and learning at home were useful to understand the parental involvement of my participants.

### **Noddings' Theory of Care**

Noddings (2013) emphasizes that parental involvement is rooted in care and their desire to promote their children's well-being. She emphasizes that simply stating the word 'care' is not enough; it must be demonstrated through actions. When someone says "I care," it must be accompanied by a genuine and direct effort to show it. Noddings (2002) posits that in a caring relationship, the initial step that parents take is becoming attentive to the needs of their children. They give their undivided attention to their child, expressing that they care for them. The caring process involves seeking out parental response, planning and implementing strategies to meet the needs of their children based on how they have listened to, observed and felt about the needs of their children (Noddings, 2013). While feeling is not the only factor, it plays a significant role in the engagement of care.

One of the fundamental concepts in Nodding's work is engrossment. She examines engrossment in relation to commitment and maintaining relationships. She argues that at the core of all forms of care is engrossment. Parents who are fully engaged with their child will listen to them, pay attention to them, comfort them, and provide warmth. Engrossment is about fully immersing oneself in the act of caring and becoming motivated by it. In this study, I aimed to explore how children perceive care and how their parents are involved in their learning process. I was particularly interested in understanding how parents are fully involved in their child's learning through care and nurturing their children.

### **Bourdieu Social Capital and Cultural Capital Theories**

Parental involvement in a child's education is a critical factor in determining their academic achievement. In this context, the cultural and social capital theories, developed by Bourdieu (1986) can provide valuable insight into how parental involvement affects a child's educational outcomes.

Bourdieu's cultural capital theory posits that individuals possess different forms of cultural capital, such as educational qualifications and knowledge, which can be converted into economic and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986 as cited in Bourdieu, 2018). When it comes to education, parents who possess a higher degree of cultural



capital, like a higher level of education and knowledge, are more likely to be able to furnish their children with the support and resources required for success in school. This can include assisting their children with homework, exposing them to cultural and educational experiences, and equipping them with the necessary materials to achieve academically.

The theory of social capital, developed by Bourdieu, also has relevance in the context of parental involvement in a child's education. Social capital refers to the networks and resources that individuals have access to, through their relationships and connections, that can be used to achieve their goals (Bourdieu, 1986). In the context of education, parents who possess higher levels of social capital, such as connections to educators and educational resources, are more likely to be able to advocate for their child's education and provide them with the support they need to succeed academically.

In conclusion, both cultural and social capital theories of Bourdieu provide valuable insights into how parental involvement can affect a child's academic achievement. The parents' possession of cultural capital can help them provide the children with the resources and support they need to succeed in school. While the possession of social capital by the parents can help them to advocate for their child's education and provide them with the support, they need to succeed academically.

In a nutshell, these three theories guided me to understand the role of parental involvement in my participants' academic success. The three components of Epstein's Framework; parenting, communicating and learning at home, helped me understand the key components of parental involvement and the parents of my participants are involved in their academic success. This also helped me in generating meanings from my participants' stories. Similarly, Noddings' Theory of Care helped me to explore how children perceive care and how their parents are involved in their learning through the medium of care and concern. Similarly, Bourdieu's Social Capital Theory and Cultural Capital Theory have given me lens to see how these capitals influence capacity of the parents to support their children in their academic success. Therefore, the blending of these theories helped me generate meanings from my participants' stories and experiences and legitimize my insights.

### **Policy Review**

The Constitution of Nepal (2015) includes a "shift in the governance and management of the educational system and its delivery mechanisms, specifically to

fulfill the new guarantees of free and compulsory basic education and free secondary education” (MOLJPA, 2015, p. 20). The National Education Policy (2019) of Nepal recognizes the importance of parental involvement in the education of their children. The policy calls for active participation of parents and communities in ensuring the accountability of teachers and head teachers for the learning achievement of their children. In addition to this, the policy also emphasizes the need for creating child-friendly and safe school environments which can be achieved through the involvement of parents in the provision of physical infrastructure such as buildings, classrooms, toilets, water, and libraries. The policy also encourages Local Levels to involve parents in various continuous professional development programs for teachers, such as customized training, workshops, seminars, observation visits, reflections, teacher networks, collaborative research, mentoring, and coaching. By promoting parental involvement in education, the 2019 National Education Policy of Nepal recognizes the crucial role that parents and communities play in the success of the education system.

The School Education Sector Plan (SESP) 2022/23-2031/32 recognizes the importance of parental involvement in improving children's nutrition, health, and learning outcomes. The plan aims to strengthen the coordination and participation of parents, Local Levels, and other stakeholders in improving the quality of health, water, sanitation, and nutrition services. To achieve this, the plan emphasizes the need to raise awareness among teachers, parents, managers, politicians, non-governmental organizations, and the public at large about the objectives, targets, activities, and outputs of the plan, including the role of various stakeholders. The plan also calls for the formation of school management committees and parent-teacher associations at the local level to develop and implement school improvement plans. Furthermore, schools are encouraged to organize parents' meetings to interact and collaborate with them and other stakeholders, and to enhance the effectiveness of social audits of school performance. By involving parents and other stakeholders in the education system, the SESP aims to improve the quality of education and promote better learning outcomes for children.

The increased authority given to local governing bodies in the new constitution requires re-evaluating the responsibilities of school management committees (SMCs). Similarly, SSRP (2009-2015) and the final report of SSRP (2016) state that for quality education, the accountability and capacity of PTAs and

SMCs need to be strengthened. As the country's system of federalism is expected to alter the responsibilities of the federal, state, and local government in terms of planning, administration, and financing, the SSDP (2016) intends to define the roles of SMCs in school-level planning and PTAs in managing internal operations and daily activities of the schools. SSDP (2016) aims to develop model schools across the country through the active participation of the parents. Likewise, recently enacted Local Government Governance Act (2017) states more than twenty powers of local government regarding education (Government of Nepal, 2017). But, as mentioned in the act and policies, the implementation seems very weak in most of the schools. The policies must also cover the role of parental involvement to improve school children's performance. In this connection, I as a researcher, argue that policies and plans developed so far in education highlighted the importance of parental participation in students' education process, however, the implementation part is lagging behind as planned as always.

### **Research Gap**

Most of the above research studies I reviewed regarding parental involvement in children's learning process were carried out quantitatively and brought some realities in the context of Nepal. But very few research touched upon the issue through a qualitative lens in Nepal's context. Furthermore, parental involvement in students' academic achievement was explored from parents' perspective; however, digging out the realities from the perspective of students themselves was rarely done. This was where I found the gap, contextually and methodologically, and in order to address this gap, I conducted this study so as to explore multiple realities in connection to parental involvement for the children's academic success through children's perspective.

### **Chapter Essence**

The chapter started with the main themes of the study: parental involvement and the academic achievement of the public school students of Nepal. I have gone through the Coleman Report (1965), some dissertations of scholars, and some articles related to my research topic. I have taken Epstein's Framework of Parental Involvement on Pupils' Performance, Noddings' Theory of Care and Bourdieu's Theories of Social Capital and Cultural Capital to support my study. I have gone through the 8th Amendment of the Education Act (2016), SSDP (2016), Local

Government Governance Act (2017) and SSRP (2009-2015) which have highlighted the necessity of PTA, the focus of my study. The research gap was then identified.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with different methodological assumptions such as philosophical foundations: ontology, epistemology and axiological assumptions; theoretical assumption; research paradigm; research design: narrative inquiry; study field and participants; information collection approaches; information generation method; information analysis and interpretation; quality standard and ethical consideration. My research methodology provides an insight for overall connection between and among my research design, paradigm, approaches and method they are grounded within the philosophical construct in relation to my research issue.

#### **My Research Paradigm**

According to Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), the research paradigm is determined by the philosophical stance on reality, knowledge, and the world. My research focuses on understanding participants' subjective experiences in their parental involvement and their academic success, which required me to adopt various perspectives to interpret their life-world experiences, (Saldana, 2021). Therefore, my research agenda necessitated an interpretive paradigm, which emphasizes action. According to Cohen et al. (2018), the interpretive paradigm was chosen to investigate the subjective world of participants' real life experiences.

Furthermore, it is only when the actors have the intention of communicating their experiences that we can attribute meaning to their actions. These shared experiences play a crucial role in our regular interactions. Since the researcher is part of the world being studied and the institutions and organizations are considered as a social construct, the interpretive paradigm recognizes that truth is subjective (Cohen et al., 2018). Essentially, individuals who inhabit their social worlds are the ones who create reality. The aim of social science is to comprehend how individuals and groups interpret the environment they exist in. The interpretive paradigm employs techniques that seek to understand by interpreting the subjective meanings that people attach to their actions.

Furthermore, the interpretive paradigms are utilized to understand individuals' experiences in their natural surroundings since knowledge is founded on human experience and is affected by their culture, history, and environment. It usually does

not employ numerical data and is carried out with a small sample size. It is crucial to comprehend the participants' subjective beliefs in relation to their local context. This is why the interpretive paradigm is regarded as the most suitable approach for qualitative research.

According to Punch and Oancea (2014), the interpretive paradigm is centered around how individuals attribute meanings to their actions and experiences in order to make sense of the world around them. It is important to understand these meanings in order to comprehend their behavior. Thus, as an interpretive researcher, I began my study by focusing on the perspectives of the participants and how they perceived their surroundings. To achieve this, I collected data from the participants' personal stories about their experiences and behaviors, which revealed varying levels of involvement of their parents in their academic journey. The objective of my research was to gain an in-depth understanding of the students' subjective experiences, so I maintained consistent engagement with them and used multiple layers of interpretation to analyze their perspectives.

### **Philosophical Foundation**

A research paradigm encompasses ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Philosophical foreground is must to accomplish any research work. For my topic, there are various components of parental involvement and their role in academic success of their children. Regarding these, as per opinion of Creswell (2009), I found multiple meaning making of individual experiences. It is very crucial to blend the ideas with world views of philosophy namely ontology, epistemology and axiology, since reality, way of knowing and valuing system represents them respectively and that helps me to stand as a researcher in my research study. Thus, this specifies and explains the nature of reality (ontology); shared experiences between the researcher and participants (epistemology); the nature of values (axiology) (Creswell, 2020).

### **Ontological Stance**

One's view of reality or way of being is called ontology (Mack, 2010). It is a study of being and the nature of reality (Cohen et al., 2018). As an interpretive researcher, I based the ontological position of this study on the multiple realities constructed by the students' themselves. Since every story is uniquely different in terms of the reality it consists of, I assumed the nature of reality is contextual and subjective. The study presented set of realities through the stories and experiences of

the students themselves regarding the role of their parental involvement in their academic successes. In addition, reality is multidimensional. The crystallization process also acknowledges that reality is multifaceted, profound, and complicated, and that comprehension is inherently limited (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Wills (2007), also claims that ontology is all about collecting the realities of societies in multiple ways with various truths. In this way, on the basis of ontological premises, I interpreted my study, and gave due emphasis to find multiple realities regarding the role of parental involvement in the educational achievement of public school children.

### **Epistemological Stance**

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that examines the nature, extent, and origins of knowledge. It addresses questions about how we know what we know and what the limits of knowledge are (Flick, 2018). In short, epistemology is association between the researcher and the participants (Snow, 2013). My epistemology was dialectic interaction between school children that helped to perceive things and construct new knowledge. Putting it in another way, these children might have different understanding about education and might be from different family background getting different components of parental involvement which as a whole was influencing academic achievement; therefore, my priority was to generate the new knowledge based upon their experiences. Similarly, my epistemology dealt with various ways of knowing like probing, constructing and interpreting the knowledge without taking knowledge for granted since conception towards education and the performance of my participants may vary in terms of their family construct and society (Saldana, 2021). I also envisioned how and in what ways these children performed differently. The dialectic interaction between my research participants and me helped seek new knowledge and information from participants. I created context-based knowledge through meaning-oriented approaches like in-depth interviews, which depend on a subjective interaction between the researcher and participants. I also constructed knowledge incorporating my research participants and my stories.

### **Axiological Stance**

According to Creswell (2020), axiology pertains to the integration of researchers' viewpoints and values in the creation of knowledge in academic literature. Thus, the axiology of my investigation pertains to my own values. I explored the values, beliefs, emotions, feelings, and opinions of my research

participants on their parental involvement in education. I aimed to elucidate how values are formed and adhered to in human existence.

In accordance with my research philosophy, my subjective perspective would hold influence over the scope of my study. At the same time, I recognized the existence of multiple realities and duly respected and acknowledged all such realities encountered in my research. The decision-making process was based on the subjective rapport between myself and the participants. However, my values were considered in an alignment with those of the participants. As such, my values were an inherent part of the research and could not be detached from it. It is possible that both my values and the values of those being studied could have influenced the expression, perspectives, and ideas presented during the course of our interactions.

### **Methodological Consideration**

The methodology employed in research encompasses the comprehensive structure that justifies the selection of a particular research design, paradigm, approach, strategy, and method. This framework additionally includes the methods utilized to collect, analyze, and interpret data surrounding the social world. Given that the interpretation of reality encompasses multiple layers, and an inductive method is implemented to generate a reality subjectively constructed, the nature of my research is qualitative. This section aims to explicate the overall procedure of how information was acquired from my research participants, analyzed, and interpreted.

### **Qualitative Approach**

This research is carried out with a qualitative approach. The focus of the study centers on parental involvement in the academic success of students, necessitating interaction with the participants to construct meaning based on their comprehension. I hold the belief that participants actively construct meaning from situations. The subjective element is ever-present when examining their behavior and interpreting their surroundings. Therefore, it is imperative to understand various realities from the perspective of the participants. Using qualitative techniques allows researchers to identify issues from the viewpoint of study participants and comprehend the meaning and interpretation they place on behaviors, situations, and objects. This approach analyzes individuals in their natural settings to determine how their experiences and behavior are shaped by the context of their lives, such as their social, economic, cultural, or physical environment (Hennink et al., 2020). Given that each person has their own understanding and interpretation of a phenomenon, parental involvement is



no exception. Qualitative research is based on the constructivist notion that reality is a collaborative and shared social experience that individuals understand. In other words, individuals act, think, and feel based on their perceptions of the world, which they regard as true.

### **Narrative Inquiry**

With the confrontation of my ontological, epistemological and axiological stances, to undertake my study, I opted for narrative inquiry. I do not claim that narrative inquiry was the sole method that would support my research project, but it was more helpful to serve my research purpose since my purpose was to explore the role of parental involvement in the public school children's academic success and how they were performing in their education and trying to find the multiple realities regarding this. As recounting or reliving an incident requires a complex description, explanation, analysis, interpretation, and awareness of one's reality. Everyone has a story, and acknowledging the power of stories, people live and the meaning it creates with a particular contextualized reality; the research used a narrative technique as a method of inquiry.

I felt closer to Elliott (2005) who quoted that the use of narrative inquiry allows for the connection of events and stories in a meaningful manner, providing insights into the world and individuals' experiences. I personally found this to be true as I reflected on and connected my participants' experiences through their sharing of personal narratives. I also believed that narrative inquiry would provide me with a rich framework through which I investigated the above components.

By this, I constructed knowledge based upon Clandinin and Connelly (2000), the three dimensional space of narrative inquiry, i.e. interaction (personal and social), continuity (past, present and future) and situation (place). I believed that narrative research aims for its finding for well-grounded and supportable arguments and it aims for verisimilitude; producing results that is the appearance of truth or reality. As my diversion was more towards the subjective reality, the approach I took was the qualitative study, and I used narrative inquiry as my research design. Narrative inquiry is a human-centered method to collect and analyse people's life stories (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Since, I looked to find the stories behind the parental involvement in the academic success of the school students, I thought I could do justice with the narrative inquiry. Here, my theoretical stances also played a big part to understand participants' stories and experiences in a more logical way.

### **Research Site and Study Participants**

Qualitative research involves selecting participants who have a rich understanding of the research topic. In this study, I was motivated by two personal cases: Raju who had to choose between work and education and Khusbu, who was positively influenced by a small gesture of care and support. Both cases involved students from disadvantaged communities enrolled in public schools, prompting I, as the researcher, to investigate how parental support impacts academic performance in public school students. As previously mentioned in Chapter I, to fulfill the unquenched thirst of unanswered questions, I selected public schools as the research site and specifically chose to study female Grade 12 students similar to Khusbu's background, who could provide detailed insights into the research question.

Due to this reason, two public schools were chosen - one in Lalitpur and one in Kathmandu. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, gaining permission from the gatekeepers at the Kathmandu school was extremely difficult. As a result, I decided to select participants exclusively from a public school in Lalitpur, which only enrolls female students.

At first, I interviewed five students. However, as argued by Hennink and Kaiser (2022), the information collected from the selected participation reached saturation after three students. Since the participants belonged to families of almost similar socio-economic status, the stories of their parents' role in their academic performance repeated. Therefore, I selected only three participants among them. For participant selection, I did not delimit in terms of gender and castes; however, I only interviewed participants from Grade 12, and tried to differentiate the parental involvement in each case so that I could maintain sociability of the participants. Question might arise why Grade 12 only? To address this, I went with the rationale that this level is the highest in school education. Being the most senior students, they were likely to be more matured to interpret their situation, particularly their parents' role in their studies. On the contrary selecting students of lower level would not fulfill my research purpose as they might not be able to give detailed and rich information as the Grade 12 students.

### **Participants**

My participants, despite facing mountains of hindrances, performed well in their academic duty. All three of them ranked among the top 10 students in their classes. It would not be difficult to imagine what difficulty these female students had

to go on daily basis to manage time and resources for their studies. Nonetheless, they were resilient and strong. I could relate these three with the most revered goddesses in Hinduism: Durga, Laxmi and Saraswati. Hence, I presented them with the same names while narrating and interpreting their stories.

### **The Story Tellers**

#### **Durga: A Girl with Determination**

Durga, a 17 year old, is a grade 12 student at a public school in Lalitpur. As a member of a family of five, Durga shares a small living space with her parents and siblings. Despite the challenges of living in two rented rooms, Durga remains focused on her education and is determined to succeed in school. As Durga navigates the demands of grade 12 and prepares for the next stage of her life, it will be important to understand her parental support to her academic progress and well-being.

During my meetings with Durga, I found her very hard working and a confident student. She has been maintaining her academic ranking within top 3 since her primary level. Both her parents are handicapped and the only income source of her family is the footpath vendor which is handled by her parents. Besides her education and supporting her parents in street vendor shop, she is also engaged in her part time job at a hotel in Lalitpur. With her part time job she is able to manage her education materials by herself.

#### **Laxmi: A Responsible Girl**

My second participant was Laxmi, a 19-year-old female who is currently studying at grade 12 in a public school in Lalitpur, Nepal. She lives with her mother, step-father, and younger sister in rented rooms at Pulchowk. Laxmi's mother works at a cooperative bank, while her step-father is a chef at a small restaurant in Newroad. When I first met Laxmi, I found her very shy kind of a girl but my perspective changed after several meetings with her. After building up a good rapport, I started interviewing her and she used to answer me without any hesitation.

She also shared her stories about her own dad leaving them with a lot of debts in their heads. The aftermath was her mother got stricken by depression due to tensions created by creditors in their community. Laxmi, herself started working as a housemaid along with her mother when she was in grade 8. While narrating her sad stories, her eyes were full of tears and I had to pause my interview for a while. With all these hurdles in her life, she has been maintaining her rank within top 5 in her class.

### **Saraswati: A Dreamer**

My third participant was Saraswati, who lives with her mother in Chyasal, Patan in a rented room. She is studying in Grade 12 in a public school in Lalitpur. Even though she also has a step-father and a younger sister, the only support she has been getting since her birth was her mother as her step-father lives along with her younger sister in his village. Her mother works as a labor in construction sites and is the only source of income of her family.

Very sadly she shared her story about her own father with whom she never met. Tragically, her father left her mother before she was born, and she faced many struggles in her young life. Despite these challenges, Saraswati is determined to succeed in school and works hard to meet her educational expenses. In order to support herself, she has taken on a job at a hotel, where she works for long hours in addition to attending school. With all these struggles also her future plan is to study up to at least Bachelor's degree before getting married.

### **Strategies of Information Collection**

I adopted the narrative inquiry approach to information collection namely open-interview with the participants in order to collect the information (field-text) with reference to research purpose and literature/document analysis to study the overall practice. In addition to above major tools, I also managed field notes, voice records, and observation and that were helpful for me to collect the 'field-text' of my study. To adhere to ethical considerations, I initially secured permission from the participants to conduct interviews at a location of their choice, such as their homes, colleges, or public spaces. To ensure the accuracy of information and events, I occasionally engaged in informal phone conversations with participants too. Proper documentation was maintained for every interview. In addition, field notes were taken to record the participants' ideas, beliefs, and practices. Formal interviews were conducted until sufficient information was gathered for the interpretation and meaning-making process. During the interview, I alternated between questions as the topic shifted. It is crucial to note that in-depth interviews should be treated as a conversation rather than a formal question-and-answer session (Moser & Korstjens, 2017).

### **Interview**

An interview is an ideal method to use as it allows for open-ended and exploratory conversation to understand the experiences, processes and outcomes of

the participants. This technique is particularly useful in describing the situation and the experiences from the perspective of the participants. Through exploring their ways of knowing and actual practices, I was able to embody my research. According to Boyce and Neale (2006), open-ended interviews are beneficial when seeking a thorough understanding of an individual's thoughts and actions or delving into new and unexplored topics. Therefore, for my study, I employed open in-depth interview to elicit the information from my research participants.

Observation was another tool for my research since it was used to bring information to analyze and interpret taken as it is observed during the various interview sessions with my research participants. For my research, I used observation as a significant tool to generate 'live' information from naturally occurring social situation i.e. interviewing sessions with participants. Building a good rapport with them helped me observe the interviewees' real status, ways of expressions, physical gesture and overall performance informally.

The vantage points of each research underlie how a researcher generates the information. Therefore, while generating the information from the field study, different methods were used in accordance with the need and necessity of the research issue that was raised. In my research, I audio-taped the open in-depth interview and also made field notes for keeping record of the views, beliefs and practices provoked by the interviewees. I also wrote a memo and journal on those striking events I encountered with the interviewees to generate new knowledge.

### **Creating Meaning from Narratives**

The collected information was interpreted accordingly since interpretation refers to developing ideas about our findings and relating them to the real life and to broader concerns and concepts. Here, the collected information of my participants from the 'field-text' was interpreted as per broader concepts embedded within their parental involvement and academic achievement. I followed Biklen and Bogdon (2011) in analyzing information by organizing, dividing it into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them and looking for patterns.

I arranged the interview, transcript, and field notes to interpret the meaning. For this process, I adopted the model of Clandinin and Connelly (2006) to interpret the text, i.e. information organization, reading and journaling, describing information into codes and themes, classifying information into codes and themes, transcribing, interpreting information, and representing information and visualizing. It means to say

that the collected 'field-text' from my participants were organized, read and re-read. After reading, I coded them thematically and classified them into different themes. Then, I interpreted and represented the overall meaning triggered by my research participants.

### **Quality Standards**

Establishing quality standards while carrying out an educational research is always necessary. Therefore, any research study should mention quality standards. In addition to conceptualizing the writing, researchers need to anticipate the ethical issues that may arise during their studies (Creswell, 2009). In addition, maintaining quality standard means letting others to judge the quality of my research study on the basis of it.

To be more precise, quality standard infers the perspective on holding the existence of the truth and the role of researcher. Here, my query was on how parental involvement influences the educational attainment of the school children. By employing narrative inquiry, I explored the role of parental involvement of the students in their academic success. Their existing truth was revealed through narratives but the biggest challenge in narrative inquiry was the truth of the stories shared by my research participants: how my participants' narrated their stories, how they interpreted their stories and how they explained it.

To be true, I was as genuine as possible because I respected their truth about their family. Truth, here, does not refer or and evaluate truth of the stories told by the participants; but truth in this research was intertwined with the concept of verisimilitude because a truth of one participants may not be the truth for another one. As stated by Clandinin and Connelly (2006), a researcher should take the account of three dimensions in narrative inquiry which are: temporality, sociality and spatiality.

### **Temporality**

In the method of narrative inquiry, it is crucial to comprehend individuals, locations, and occurrences as being in a state of change, as nothing remains constant, but is instead continually in flux. Temporality refers to the events in retrospect, current and next. Therefore, while generating meaning from narrative events in the form of stories and experiences of my participants, I attempted to find out their concurrent incidents of adversities and resilience that were influenced by their past experience and also how they forecasted their future. As a researcher, with the importance of friendly relationship with participants, their stories were revealed step

by step over the time which increased the trustworthiness in the findings (Marggetti, Gilardi & Radaelli, 2013).

### **Sociality**

Narrative inquiries are entwined with personal and social interactions which engulf the inquirer and the study participants' feelings, hopes, desires, moral obligations, etc. The term sociality pertains to the emphasis of considering the situational elements such as the surrounding environment and external factors that help in collecting narrative texts. Sociality refers to the need to focus on the existential conditions like environment and surrounding factors, which help in collecting narrative texts. It emphasizes development of good social relations among researchers and participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006). I took care of both the personal and social interactions of my participants. I was careful while generating meaning of their personal stories in order to consider how their passions, feelings, concerns and moral obligation were shaped by each of their social interaction and surrounding measures to know their perception towards education.

### **Spatiality**

Place always has a strong bond with one's memory and experiences. As a narrative inquirer, I valued place, as it might change the inquiry into temporality. For maintaining quality standards in the research, places guide us to events as well as experiences for meaning making; so its importance should not be sidelined. Linkage of places with my participants' experiences provided flow to their stories and confession of lived experiences becomes more vivid.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations in research include obtaining informed consent, ensuring protection from harm, maintaining privacy and confidentiality, and addressing issues related to payment and gifts. These are highlighted by Rainbow (2002) as critical considerations to take into account. This is an important component while conduction of any type of research. Looking at the nature of my study, I dealt with lots of participants; so I needed to be aware of ethical considerations from my part. In order to do so, I was careful that I would not do any harm to them: physical, emotional and/or mental etc. Also, I needed to respect their values and decision by avoiding biasness. I treated all the participants equally. At any stage, for any reason, if they wanted to pull out from the research, I would adhere to their decisions. I did

not make public any identification and information regarding my participants without their consent.

I understood that every researcher should anticipate ethical issue during their research as it helps the researcher to shape the research. I believed that ethics refers to the moral principles that influence and control the person's behavior. Similarly, I understood ethics as the already determined norms of people, place and works that provide the separate identity for them. As stated by Given (2008), ethics is a branch of philosophy that deals with appropriate behavior and moral principles. Similarly, Cohen et al. (2007) note that privacy can be evaluated from various angles such as the nature of the information being shared, the context in which it is being gathered, and how the information is being disseminated. I was closer with the view of Cohen et al. (2007) as I, as a researcher respected the sensitivity of the context, realities and the phenomena. Since my research participants were school children and the main theme was their parental involvement, I was sensibly presenting their views.

As a qualitative narrative inquirer, I clearly assured my research participants that my study was purely academic and that there was no other purpose besides this in carrying out this research study. Here, at this point, I honestly clarified my research participants about my research objectives and requested the correct information, i.e. their real stories. I also developed a good rapport with them and made them feel that they are not getting any kind of harm and hurt by this. The way I coded the name of my research participants did not harm on the part of my research participants because I coded them with pseudo names to ensure their identities and research's confidentiality.

In addition, as one of the fundamental aspects and duties of a researcher was to safeguard the right and welfare of the research participants involved in my research, I was as fair and ethical as possible. I did not reveal their secret and privacy so that they would not feel any aspect of biasness throughout the study. Rather, I respected their stories or shared experiences. I assured that the verisimilitude of the research findings were the stepping-stone for those who were solely devoted to their professional development.



## CHAPTER IV

### UNLOCKING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN STUDENTS' ACADEMIC SUCCESS

This chapter deals with the thematic representation of my participants' experiences on the role of their parental involvement in their academic journey. I have presented a brief introduction of my three research participants whom I met several times in my two-month information collection journey. With a focus on the research question: "How do students narrate the role of their parental involvement in their academic success?", the interviews were centered towards their experiences and stories related to their parental involvement.

My research participants were secondary level female students currently studying at Grade 12 in one of the public schools of Lalitpur. To maintain each participant's privacy, I have assigned each of them with a pseudo name. I collected narratives of my participants on their parental involvement in learning. I transcribed the interviews and read them many times. After that, I organized the information into four themes: Parental Support Despite All Odds, Communication as a Key Catalyst, Learning Environment at Home and Overcoming Economic Adversity. This narrative study thus aimed to describe the parental involvement in children academic achievement. Their narratives were collected through in-depth interviews.

#### **Parental Support Despite All Odds**

After transcribing the interviews with my participants, the first theme stood out was Parenting. Parenting refers to the activities and attitudes of parents as they raise and nurture their children. Parenting practices can include things like setting rules and boundaries, providing emotional support, promoting independence, and helping children develop skills and competencies. The role of parenting in shaping children's learning and development cannot be understated, as parents frequently serve as role models and have the power to shape their children's attitudes and behaviors.

Going through the stories of all my participants regarding parenting and parental support in their education, I found out one common thing in all the cases: even though the parents are not well educated and financially well off, they always wanted their children to focus on their study. Regarding parenting, Durga mentioned

that even though both her parents were disabled, they have asked their neighbor to help them admitting their daughter to the nearby school on time. She recalls this by saying, *“My father had some money to pay for the room rent but instead he paid for my admission fees so that I can start my schooling on time”*. She further added, *“even though my parents are not educated, they have always encouraged us to study. I started working in a hotel since a year ago which my father didn’t like as he always says that we can cut off our meals to meet up your educational expenses but you have to focus on your study, not job.”*

When I asked her the reason behind joining her job during this crucial time of high schooling, she replied me as, *“Both my parents are physically disabled and the only income source of my parents is footpath vendor shop, so to meet up my educational expenses, I had to join this job”*. She also shared that once she had to leave the examination hall just to protect her parents’ footpath shop as her parents cannot protect those from metro police.

Regarding mentoring at home, she sadly said no one is there for her who can guide at home and have to wait to meet her teacher until next day if she got stuck in any problem related to her subjects. After hearing her stories of working at a hotel and managing both study and work, I asked her about her academic performance after joining the job and her answer was, *“Before joining the job, my rank in my class was within top 3 but now-a-days it’s declining as I am facing difficulties in managing time.”*

Laxmi also shared many stories about her parental support in her education, where I found out her parents also always wanted her to study and supported as much as they could. Sharing her stories, she mentioned that,

*Once we had a terrible situation at home where my own dad left us with a total loan of over two million rupees. In that situation when my mom was taking medicines of depression, she always sent me to the school. That was when I was in grade 8 and I also began to work as a housemaid to help my mother.*

After this, she immediately changed her facial expression showing some happiness and said that her step-father currently her supports more than her mother. In the context of mentoring at home, I asked whether her step-father and mother are able to help her in her studies to which she shared, *“Both my step-father and mother are not so educated to help me in my study. So I have been taking help from my friends*

*and teachers.*” She also stated that since her grade 8 her absenteeism gradually increased but after her mother got married, gradually it has minimized now as one important and earning member was added to their family. She happily shared, *“Even though he doesn’t earn much working as a chef in a small restaurant, he has always encouraged me and my sister to focus on our studies and he gets angry whenever I go to work instead of school.”* She mentioned that he has been taking care of them as their real father. In this context, she recalled, *“Whenever I have a night duty in my hotel, he always keeps waiting for me in front of the main gate of the hotel.”*

In the context of her job in hotel, when I asked her the reason behind continuing her job even after her step-father came into her family, she admitted that, *This has happened all because of my own father who left us with the burden of huge loan. So, just to help my mom clearing that loan, I have been working. We have still 3 lakhs rupees on our head. So after clearing that I can just focus on my studies but by that time I think my 12<sup>th</sup> board examination will be finished.*

I also asked her about her academic performance in her school after she got engaged both in her studies and work, to which she mentioned like Durga that her ranking has been declining these days as she gets very less time for the study.

Unlike Durga and Laxmi, my third participant Saraswati had some different stories to share in the context of parental involvement and her learning achievement. She had been staying with her mother in a single rented room. Her mother had been working as a marble cleaning labor and taking care of all the expenses. With all the hardship she admitted Saraswati to the school on time and encouraged her to focus on her study. To my question to Saraswati regarding her mother’s support in her education, she answered me, *“My mother has studied up to class 2 only; but she knows the value of education and has always emotionally supported me. She cannot help me with my studies but has fulfilled my education related demand as much as she can.”* She further added that the only option for her while having any difficulties in her study is to meet her teachers and get it done in school.

She regrets of not having her father along with her and shared, *“I’m sure that if my father had been along with me, my school life wouldn’t have been full of struggle. But I’m happy with my mother that she alone has been taking care of me and my education since my early days.”* Wondering about her father, I asked about him and very sadly she said,

*My father left my mom before I was born, he even does not know about my existence in this world. So just to get my birth certificate, she got married to another person in mutual understanding as my step-father was also a divorcee. After living with us for some time, he is also living separately with my younger step-sister in his village now.*

Talking about her mother's support, Saraswati shared a story to me, *My mom has always supported me emotionally and morally. Financially she is unable to fulfill everything but I must be thankful to her and I always salute her for the dedications towards me She doesn't like me being absent in school and going to work in school time. Once she even scolded me in doing so. Then I have tried my best not to hurt her.*

Saraswati appreciated her mother's support towards her education and is working hard to perform better in her SLC board examination. She also revealed that if she gets time at home, she helps her mother in household works.

All the three participants had their own stories regarding their family composition and parental support; but coincidentally they have similar stories like all their parents are not much educated but they wanted their children to work hard on their study. Even though they are financially weak, priority has been given to children's education as Durga shared her story of her father admitting her to school with the money he had to pay for the house rent. In the case of Laxmi and Saraswati also, their mothers played vital roles in their lives. The other common thing I found among my participants was that besides having their education journey full of struggle, they all were happy with their parents and they also knew that their parents had brought them up in difficulties. They have taught them the value of education and good behaviors.

### **Communication as a Key Catalyst**

After getting to know about my participants and their families, I wanted to explore more about their parents communicating with them and their schools regarding their education. Communication in this context refers to sharing information on the children's academic progress and extra-curricular activities at school. Communication is the best approach to stay in touch with students regarding school activities and their academic or personal growth. Better communication between the home and the school should be part of parental participation, giving children greater opportunities to participate in classroom activities.

I found similar stories in the cases of Durga and Laxmi whereas there was different story from Saraswati regarding their parental communication. When I asked Durga regarding her parents' communication with school and herself regarding her study, she said that her mother never went to school as she couldn't deal with other people nicely, but her father went to school regularly. I asked her whether or not her father was able to communicate with her school properly. In response to this, she remembered a story of her father visiting to her school once::

*Once our school used to fine us 10 rupees per day for absence in school. I could not go to school due to my health condition. So my father went to school and said to my principal that it was not good to fine poor people like them. Rather they could ask their students to submit leave application or notes signed by their parents. Then our school stopped fining us for our absenteeism.*

I also asked her whether or not her parents ask her about her homework and study regularly. She stated, *"In this case, both my mother and father always ask me about my homework and study. So they let me do my homework while I go to help them in our street vendor shop and even ask me to go back to home and study well."* She further elaborated that saying,

*"My father always checks my results. Earlier he used to be happy after seeing some stars in my mark sheet but now-a-days he does not understand our grading system and feels sad after seeing my grade sheet. But not to worry, when I explain him my grades, he smiles at me says "Syabaas chhori!"*

While talking to her about her father's involvement further, she also recollected memories of her father going to school several times to arrange scholarship for her. She sadly stated that, *"My father also arranged recommendation letter from ward office to apply scholarship twice or thrice but school principal didn't managed it."*

She also shared that after several requests for scholarship, her school somehow managed a private donor for her until class ten. She was not happy with her school as she said,

*"My school has never called my parents in any event. But every time my father went to school to pay my fees, he used to meet my principal and shared his views and complaints. But I think none was taken into account except the one on absenteeism fine."*

I found Durga's father played very important role in her education as he visited her school regularly; he not only visited school to pay her fees but also met school principal every time he visited her school.

Laxmi also had similar stories like Durga regarding her parents' communication with her school and herself. Her mother used to ask her about her homework and results regularly. She recalled about her own father and said she does not have any memory of her own father going to her school. In this regard, she stated, *"Since my childhood I only know my mother going to my school for any kind of work, like to pay fee or parents teacher meeting or to make complaints."* She got disappointed of not getting support from her own father but was thankful to her mother who despite of so much of sufferings has been taking care of her. Regarding her mother's communication with her school she stated, *"Now-a-days she does not have much time as before but she talks to my principal sir if she is unable to manage time to visit in person."* She also shared the reason of her mother being so much busy as she has been working hard to repay the loan that was burdened to them by her own father. She said,

*"My mom is so busy these days that she does not even see my grade sheet but she asks about it to me regularly and sometime I feel amazed with her behavior. It must be due to so much of pressure in her mind, all because of that loan, she asks me to focus on my study and also says to go to work as well."*

I found Laxmi so understanding about her mother; she has seen the hardship of her mother and she has been learning life lessons from all the happenings. She admitted that she would work hard to obtain good grades in her 12<sup>th</sup> and said, "I will study and work hard to earn enough money to make a nice home for my mother before getting married.

In the same context, I have talked to Saraswati, but I have to say Saraswati was somewhat different kind of a girl and has different stories than those of Durga and Laxmi. Regarding communication with school, she mentioned that since her mother was not much educated, most of time she would deny to visit her school. She said, *"My mom is a marble cleaner and goes to work most of the time; she does not want to lose her daily wages so she gives less priority in going to my school."* I then asked her what her school said about that to her, she answered that she made excuses

every time with her teachers and principal. I have also inquired about her result collection and grades inquiry from her mother and she informed,

*“She cannot manage to collect my result also. Every time I collect it myself and show it to my teachers. But yes, after coming to home she always to asks me about my result and when I say that I passed my examination, she would be happy. Regarding the grades, she does not understand current grading system so only pass is ok for her.”*

Saraswati revealed many times about her difficult student life at school; she had very less friends and most of the time she was alone at home as her mother goes to work every day. She recalled stories of her struggling academic journey yet she was determined to complete her high schooling and plan for abroad study.

All my participants’ parents were not school graduates but they knew the value of education and wanted their children to study as much as they could. Durga and Laxmi’s parents communicated with the school regularly and they also regularly asked their daughters about their studies. This has made their daughters more aware about their study and results. On the other hand, Saraswati's mother had limitations as she was forced to work to earn for their basic needs.

### **Learning Environment at Home**

When parents create a supportive and enriching environment for learning at home, it can foster a love of learning, encourage academic engagement, and support the development of important skills and competencies. My participants have narrated their experiences and perspectives on learning at home, and how this shaped their academic and personal growth. My participants’ stories have suggested a third theme: Learning at Home, which means the home environment and resources available to students for learning.

Coincidentally, all my participants had somewhat similar kind of stories in regard to learning environment and resources at home. Durga’s story in this regard was that her home environment is not much friendly for her learning but somehow she managed to study at home. She stated saying, *“I don’t have separate place at home to study. So I study after all my family members sleep or before they wake up.”* Talking about the resources and learning materials at home, she sadly shared that her parents do not earn much to fulfill all her educational needs. She recalled,

*While I was in grade 9, I was in need of a scientific calculator but I couldn’t ask my parents to buy one for me as total sales of a day of our shop would not*

*be sufficient for that calculator. This is the reason I started working when I was in grade 11.”*

She happily mentioned that now they have internet at home and she got mobile phone after passing her SEE, so these days she learns from YouTube in case of difficulties. But paradoxically again recalled again and said,, *“It’s easy now that I earn and can buy my educational materials but I don’t have much time to study.”*

Similar to Durga, Laxmi has also shared her similar stories and experiences. She also does not have separate space for her to study at home and manages to study on her bed. She has been working since she was in grade 8 and has been taking care of her sister’s educational materials. In my question about her taking care of her sister’s educational materials,as well as her own requirement, her answer was really heart touching for me. She mentioned, *“I prepare my copies with the remaining pages of previous year’s copies and adding some loose sheets. For books, half of the books are given to me by my school and the others are purchased by my mom.”* She also added , *“Now I don’t have such problems as I can buy these things for me with my current job.”*

Regarding home environment, she also shared stories of some traumatic situations she and her mother went through after her own father left them with loans. She mentioned that her absenteeism increased during that time and slowly her ranking also went down but now it is improving. She concluded, *“After that time I realized home environment and mental condition are very important for student’s learning outcome.”*

Saraswati has been living with her mother in a single room, and talking about her learning environment at home she said that she normally studied on her bed and best time for her to study is during day time as whole day her mother wouldn’t be at home. Regarding learning materials, she stated that, *“Some books were given by my school and copies are provided by my scholarship provider; but I got my first calculator very late as it is expensive thing for my mom.”* Talking about study time, she shared that her mother worked hard as a marble cleaner to meet all the household expenses. So she helps her mother cook dinner and with other household work. She feels awkward to demand anything to her mother as she revealed that,

*I have seen my mother’s hard work. So how do I demand anything I need to her? This is the reason I started working so that at least I can support my*



*mother, but it is very difficult for me to manage both work and study as my health condition is also not good.*

I found all my three participants do not have a favorable home environment for their learning; but it is appreciable that these girls are working hard and are interested in studying through these tough times too.

### **Overcoming Economic Adversity**

Going through the narratives of all my participants, I have seen these girls are facing lot of challenges during their education journey until today. They understand their parents' ability and financial conditions, instead of demanding they are supporting their parents as much as they can. Durga shared her story of hardship she faced during her school journey. Despite her best efforts, she struggled to manage her educational materials on time and often felt unable to demand the support she needed from her parents. Durga knew her parents' income was very low as they were relying on a small street vendor business as their only source of income. She recalled the past days saying, *"I could not ask my parents to buy a scientific calculator until I passed my SEE."* She also added, *"My father arranged a private donor for my tuition scholarship but we had to listen to many things from that ma'am."* Sharing one of the embarrassed situations she encountered she said,

*Once my elder sister had to go to Darjeeling for an educational tour organized by our school and my father requested our principal sir to give us some discounts but they denied and even mentioned that the tour was mandatory for every student otherwise the absentees would't get the practical marks, so my father had taken loan to send my sister in that tour.*

Durga further added that if her parents' financial condition would have been better, she could have done better than today, she stressed out as, *"I have maintained top 3 position in my class until my SEE and could not go above that, but if my situation was better then I would have been the first girl of my class."* She further added, *"Experiencing all these bitter things I started working in a hotel so that at least I can fulfill my educational needs."*

Laxmi also shared similar stories; her situation was even worse as her own father left them with all total of twenty-one lakhs rupees' loan. Due to this, her absenteeism increased for some time when she was in grade 8. She had to compromise in many things. She stated very sadly, *"I wanted to study PCL Nursing after my SEE but due to financial condition, I had to join my same school to study*

*management.*” She recalled her hardship of recollecting her unused papers from previous year’s copies and adding loose sheets to those to make new copies for new session and with a happy face she expressed, *“Now I don’t have to do all these things as today I earn enough to buy new copies and other materials easily.”*

In my conversation to her, she mentioned several times that she had to compromise a lot due to her financial condition. She also recalled a story when her classmates left her alone during tiffin break while her bench mate was absent in a day of class ten. She explained this as,

*Me and my best friend used to bring tiffin from home. But I still remember one day of my class ten when my best friend was absent, all my class mates left me alone as they were from rich families and went to canteen for their tiffin.*

She thought her school journey as a storm and sometimes felt like leaving school but the only thing controlled that storm was her mother’s face. So she is now determined to go with the flow and wanted to fulfill her mother and her younger sister’s dreams.

Saraswati also shared her struggling academic journey. Like Durga and Laxmi, she had also faced difficulties in managing books, copies and other education materials. She recalled a story of leaving an educational tour of her school. She said, *“Once my school had arranged an educational tour. But I had to drop my participation only because my mom could not manage money for that.”* Experiencing all these difficulties since her childhood, she made up her mind to work when she started her grade twelve. She also shared that she had been facing hard times as her health condition was also not good. However, she was forced to manage both her work and study. To sum up, she mentioned, *“It feels very sad that due to poor financial condition, I could not do better in my study and if my parents would have earned better my life would not be so difficult.”*

### **Chapter Essence**

I presented my three participants' experiences and stories related to parental involvement. I divided their narratives into four themes: first was parental support despite all odds, and the second was communication as a key catalyst, which played a role of catalyst for my participants in their academic journey. Next was learning environment at home and the fourth theme I explained here was overcoming economic adversity which dealt with struggles of my participants.

## CHAPTER V

### INSIGHTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter consist the insights I gained from the narratives of my participants. Similarly, I have discussed these findings in line with prevalent literature and relevant theories. After that, I have presented the conclusion of the study followed by personal reflection of the entire research process and implications in the last chapter of this study.

#### **Insights**

This study aimed to explore parental involvement in public school female students' academic life. As I explored my participants' stories, I found variations in their narratives regarding parental involvement and learning achievements. Through their narratives, my research directed toward new understandings of parental involvement and learning achievements and to present the insights I have plotted it down in four sections.

With respect to my first theme of previous chapter, which also aligns with the theory of Epstein's Framework's first component: parenting, my participants' narratives revealed that either of the parents, which means either father or mother, played an influential role in their lives to focus towards their studies. In the case of Durga, it was her father who played a vital role in shaping her mindset regarding value of education in life. In spite of being not so educated, her father always valued education and imprinted this in her mind that she should always focus on her study rather than work. Durga also knew that her father's words and guidance played a crucial role in shaping her student life. The memory of her father's words, "We can cut off our meal for your education," was forever etched in her mind, motivating her to strive for academic success.

In the case of Laxmi and Saraswati, their mothers played an important role in shaping their educational journey. They both were raised by their mothers who instilled in them a deep appreciation for the value of education in today's world. Their mothers, who had always placed a premium on learning in their mindset, played a vital role in shaping their daughters' mindsets and encouraging them to strive for academic excellence. The words and guidance of their mothers, who emphasized the importance of education, were engrained in the minds of Laxmi and Saraswati,

motivating them to work hard and achieve their goals. The mothers of Laxmi and Saraswati were the driving force behind their daughters' academic success and they will always be grateful for the role they played in their lives.

As I listened to the participants' narratives, I began to uncover a common thread. Despite the fact that both parents were not able to mentor their children, even if they were not regularly involved in their study, the nurturing and care they provided, along with the emphasis they placed on education, had a lasting imprint on the participants' mindsets. Through their stories, it became clear that shaping a child's mind towards education, even without regular involvement, can leave a lasting impression that guides them throughout their lives. The participants' stories were a testament to the powerful role that parents can play in shaping their children's future, even if they are not always present in their day-to-day activities.

Besides parenting, this study discovered another insight that effective communication of parents with schools and their children can play the influential role in the learning achievement of the children. As I got to know more about Durga and Laxmi, it became more clear that their parents played a crucial role in their academic success. Durga's father and Laxmi's mother were both in regular communication with their school, which had a powerful impact on their children's mindset and motivation to perform well in their studies. Both Durga and Laxmi were able to maintain their positions as top three and top four students respectively, until tenth grade; they also realized the fact that this happened all because of the support and guidance provided by their parents since their childhood. Not only were Durga's father and Laxmi's mother in regular contact with the school, but they also regularly checked their children's results and asked about their studies. This regular communication and support not only helped Durga and Laxmi to stay on top of their schoolwork but also helped them boost interest in their studies resulting in even better performance.

Through the narratives of Saraswati, I discovered that her mother could not go to school in any of the events either to take the result or to attend the parents-teachers meeting, rather she would go to her work as she does not want to miss a single day wage. It seems that Saraswati's mother was much concerned with not missing her work as she was the only bread winner of the family and was forced to lessen her concern towards Saraswati school and her learning. As a result of external pressures, Saraswati's mother's lack of involvement in her daughter's education might have had a detrimental impact on her academic performance. This forced distance between

mother and child might have contributed to Saraswati's underperformance compared to Durga and Laxmi, whose parents were actively engaged and supportive in their educational pursuits. The absence of a nurturing and communicative relationship between mother and daughter in this context may have negatively impacted the child's academic progress.

The third takeaway from the narratives of my participants is that despite facing difficult home environments, the girls were able to maintain a strong interest in their education and worked hard to succeed academically. Despite the lack of a favorable home environment for learning, their determination and perseverance shines through. This highlights the resilience and motivation of these young girls in the face of adversity, and the importance of providing support and resources to help them overcome any challenges they may encounter in their pursuit of education. Durga shared her stories of how she managed her study in her home environment all these years. She either studied in the late night after all her family members sleep or in the early morning before they wake up. Similarly, Laxmi organized her notes by using the leftover pages from her previous year's notebooks and supplementing them with some loose sheets. Saraswati also had similar stories regarding her home environment and facilities. She utilized afternoon time for her study in absence of her mother as she had been managing everything in a single room.

With the seeded importance of education in their mind, all my participants, Durga, Laxmi and Saraswati were determined to complete their high school with better results. The only reason for all of them to join their work was just to fulfill their educational needs where their parents were not able to manage all those educational needs.

The last takeaway from the narratives of my participants is parental care and concern was more important regardless of their financial capability. The narratives shared by all three participants revealed the struggles they faced due to financial crisis, and how it affected their school life. Their stories highlighted the importance of parental care and concern, even in the face of financial difficulties. The participants' experiences demonstrate that parental support and guidance can significantly impact a child's education, and can help mitigate the negative effects of financial hardship. Durga shared the story of her understanding of her parents' earning and how she restrained herself in demanding a scientific calculator. Similarly, Laxmi shared the story of her compromise in studying Management as her mother could not afford to

admit for PCL Nursing. Saraswati also had to drop her participation from the educational tour organized by her school.

### **Discussion**

The involvement of parents and families in the education and growth of children is substantial. This is demonstrated by the monitoring of their child's learning and their participation in school events. Parental involvement plays a crucial role in a child's educational achievement, surpassing even the influence of factors such as socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, or educational background of the family, as reported by Amatea and West (2007). My participants' stories were a testament to the powerful role that parents can play in shaping their children's futures, even if they are not always present in their day-to-day activities. In addition to above, effective communication of parents with schools and their children can play the influential role in the learning achievement of the children. Even though my participants were from the same school, they had different family constructs with some similar stories of hardship with some variations. Based on their narratives, I have discussed my findings with relevant literature and theories below under four themes.

The finding of this study showcased the importance of the nurturing and care provided by parents, even if they are not regularly involved in their child's academic journey. The participants' stories in the study demonstrated that the emphasis placed on education by their parents had a lasting impact on their mindset, guiding them throughout their lives. Despite the fact that both parents were not able to mentor their children, even if they were not regularly involved in their study, the nurturing and care they provided, along with the emphasis they placed on education, had a lasting imprint on the participants' mindsets. Durga's father played a crucial role in influencing her perception of the importance of education in life, whereas for Laxmi and Saraswati, their mothers played noteworthy roles in shaping their educational paths. Durga and Laxmi were getting more care from their father and mother respectively than that of Saraswati, as her mother had some limitations in providing much care to her. With better care and concern of either of the parents in first two participants, they were getting better results in their examinations as they were maintaining third and fourth rank in their class whereas with little pressure from her mother the third participant was just an average student. The primary conclusion of this study is that regardless of the parents' ability to involve themselves in their children's learning, shaping a child's mind towards education through better care and

nurturing can leave a lasting impression and motivates them to perform better in school.

As I introspect my parental involvement in my school days, I was lucky enough to get the good care and support from my father. He used to help me in my home assignments and always asked about my school activities and home works. Home works and other school activities were never a problem for me. Similar to the stories of my participants, my mother could not help me with my studies as she only got the opportunity to complete her basic level education. But this does not mean she was not concerned with my study. With all the facilities and much care and concern from my father, I enjoyed my school life and I always used to be the class topper throughout my school life.

This understanding which I have drawn from my participants and my own experience is also the understanding of researchers. These findings align with previous studies, including Regner et al. (2009), who have found that parental academic monitoring has a positive impact on the mastery goals of middle school students. Similarly, Clark (1993) has discovered that parental monitoring of children's behavior after school results in improved academic performance. Keith et al. (1993) have conducted a research on middle school students and found that parental involvement in homework checking is positively associated with students' academic performance (Jaiswal & Choudhari, 2017, p. 117). However, other studies, such as Pezdek et al. (2002) have found no relationship between PI in homework and children's academic performance. Similarly, Fan and Chen (2001) have discovered that the level of parental involvement at home, as gauged by parental supervision, does not significantly affect the academic performance of middle school students.

Additionally, this finding also aligns with Noddings' theory of care, which emphasizes the importance of the emotional and moral connection between care providers and recipients in promoting well-being and positive outcomes. Nodding's theory emphasizes the importance of the emotional and moral connection between care providers and recipients; in this case the parent and child, in promoting well-being and positive outcomes. The nurturing and care provided by the parents in this study and the emphasis they placed on education created a sense of emotional and moral connection that had a lasting impact on the participants' mindset towards education. This also aligns with the Epstein's Framework first component "parenting",

which emphasizes the importance of providing emotional support, instilling values, and creating a positive home environment for children.

My understanding as I interpret the insights of the study in line with the above discussed theories and literature was that for parents in families that struggle to fulfill basic needs had limited resources and time for their children. Even though they knew less about their roles as parents, they tried their best to do whatever they could. Their role as parents as they bestowed care and emotional support to their children encouraged the latter to be involved in their study. Similarly, though limited, the act of monitoring from their parents about their school assignments and attendance helped them show the importance of education in them.

Furthermore, the study has shown that effective communication between parents, schools, and children can play a crucial role in promoting academic success. The regular communication and support provided by Durga's father and Laxmi's mother had a powerful impact on their children's mindset and motivation to perform well in their studies. Both Durga and Laxmi were able to maintain their positions as top three and top four students respectively, until tenth grade, and attribute their success to the support and guidance provided by their parents since their childhood. On the other hand, the absence of effective communication and support can have a negative impact on a child's academic performance. The distance between mother and child, caused by the mother's need to prioritize work over school events, may have contributed to Saraswati's underperformance compared to Durga and Laxmi. Therefore, it is important to foster a nurturing and communicative relationship between parents, school and children to promote academic success.

When I reflect on my school days, my father was the one who was in regular touch with my principal and my subject teachers. With his frequent visits to my school, he was offered a position in SMC of my school; but he could not accept the offer due to his obligations in Guthi Sansthan. Not only was he in regular communication with my school but he also regularly asked me to update my school works and asked me of any requirement he needed to fulfill. This had always motivated me towards my study.

This finding is in line with Rai (2019), who has found that parental communication played a vital role in their adolescent's school performance. According to Rai (2019), effective communication between parents and children during adolescence is linked to positive family dynamics. This type of communication



involves open expression of emotions, addressing challenging topics, actively listening, and encouraging children to seek help and ask questions when needed. When parents are not able to provide this type of communication, it can have negative consequences for the child, such as difficulty in navigating life's challenges. The findings of Newchurch (2017) also emphasize the importance of effective communication in promoting student success and strengthening the partnership between home and school. Zakaria (2013) has also found that various factors such as communication and interaction, parenting practices, leisure, openness, and acceptance, were the key predictors of PI and had a positive relationship with students' academic success.

In contrast, Tan and Goldberg (2009) have found that direct involvement of parents in the school, such as participating in PTA meetings, helping in the classroom, communicating with teachers, and taking part in school activities, had a positive connection with children's enjoyment at school but a negative relationship with their overall grades. This negative correlation was only observed in students whose parents thought they did not need assistance in school. This finding also aligns with the second component of the Epstein Framework, which is communication as the finding suggests that the regular communication and support provided by parents to the school and their children can have a powerful impact on their mindset and motivation to perform well in their studies.

As I discussed the findings in alignment of previous studies and relevant theories, this discussion shows that communication between students and parents and parents and schools help students ensure that their parents are aware of their progress, strength and weakness in their study. It also play an affirmative role between parents and teachers to work together to support the students' academic and personal growth. In the same way, effective communication can help create a better understanding of each other's perspective, leading to more productive conversations and solutions even at home.

Moreover, while interpreting my participants' stories regarding their home environment and their parents' involvement at home, I found that despite facing difficult home environments, these girls maintained a strong interest in their education and worked hard to succeed. Their determination and perseverance highlighted their resilience and motivation in the face of adversity, highlighting the importance of providing support and resources. The participants: Durga, Laxmi and Saraswati, have

overcome challenges in their home environment by studying late at night, using remaining pages of previous year copies and utilizing afternoons when their mother was absent, respectively. They are determined to complete high school with better results and had joined their work only to fulfill their educational needs.

An important finding of this study is that even though my participants' parents were unable to involve with their child's education at home, they succeeded in nurturing their children showing importance of education in one's life. Parents of my participants were very less educated and their priority was to fulfill the basic needs of home as all of them were from low economic backgrounds.

My own experience regarding the learning at home was very convenient, as my father used to fulfill all my educational needs including separate space for my study at home. During the time when I was in my tenth grade, we used to call SLC as an iron gate and I still remember those days our country was in extreme power cut and load-shedding and my father bought an emergency light for me so that my study time at home would not get hampered.

This understanding which I have drawn from my participants and my own experience, is also the understanding of researchers. In line with my above finding, Marphatia et al. (2010) also have discussed similar findings on their research in "Politics of participation: parental support for children's learning and school governance in Burundi, Malawi, Senegal and Uganda". Marphatia et al. (2010) suggested that parents' livelihood activities can impact their ability to consistently support their children's education. In regions such as Mchinji, Malawi, and Masindi, Uganda, poverty and the need for children to supplement family income through farm and small business work is a major reason for parents pulling their children out of school. In Kalangala, Uganda, many parents are nomadic/migratory fisher folk who move frequently and lack the time and resources to engage in their children's education. This makes it difficult for these parents to connect with school staff and provide residential housing for their children, causing some to question the importance and relevance of schooling for their children. A similar inverse trend was observed in a meta-analysis by Jeynes (2005), who found no correlation between parental involvement in home activities and academic performance in elementary school students. In her study conducted in Kapitvastu district, Bhusal (2018) also presented the similar finding that parents in that district were moderately involved in

different parental involvement activities like parenting, communicating and learning at home.

Bourdieu's cultural and social capital theories provide valuable insights into my finding above. The parents' possession of cultural capital can help them provide the children with the resources and support they need to succeed in school. Parents who possess social capital are better equipped to advocate for their child's education and provide the necessary support for academic success. However, in the case of my study participants, their parents appear to have less cultural and social capital, leading to reduced involvement in their children's education at home.

The churning of these findings with the prevalent literature and theories highlighted that parents could play a crucial role in their children's academic achievement, even if they were struggling economically. Seeing parents create positive learning environment at home; providing necessary materials and resources and doing additional jobs to meet their expectations foster positive attitude towards their parents and understanding why they need to perform well in their study. In a way, these endeavors from parents gave them purpose to do well in their academic duty.

Additionally, the narratives shared by all three participants in the study revealed the struggles they faced due to financial crisis and how it affected their school life. Durga shared her story of her understanding about her parents' earning and restrained herself in demanding just a scientific calculator. Similarly, Laxmi shared her story of her compromising in studying Management as her mother could not afford her to admit for PCL Nursing. Saraswati also had to drop her participation from the educational tour organized by her school. Experiencing all these difficulties since childhood, they started to work so that they would not have to compromise anything for their educational needs. Despite these financial difficulties, the participants' experiences demonstrate that parental support and guidance can significantly impact a child's education and help mitigate the negative effects of financial hardship. Their stories highlighted the importance of parental care and concern, regardless of their financial capability in supporting children's education. I noted two important aspects in this finding: one, the parental care, concern and nurturing their children showing them the importance of education, a right path for life, despite having some financial limitations and the another, children's realization of their parents' situation and importance of education their lives.

My own experience to this was: despite being born and brought up in a middle class family, my father had fulfilled all my needs during my school life. The need of job in me aroused only after I passed my Bachelor's degree.

Previous research studies have also highlighted the significance of parental involvement and support for children's learning, particularly for low-income families. Henderson and Mapp (2002) have found that PI in children's education is a key predictor of academic success, regardless of the family's socioeconomic status. Another study by Lareau (2011) found that parental support and guidance can help alleviate the negative effects of poverty on children's education. Similarly, Seymour (2019) has also found that the environment, including factors such as income, work conditions, and culture, in which parents and children live, have an effect on the amount of time available to parents and their level of involvement. These findings align with the results of the current study, which highlight the importance of parental care and concern in supporting children's education, even in the face of financial difficulties. On the contrary, one of the findings in the quantitative study of Mishra (2010) has shown that the income of parents was directly related to performance of their children so as to fulfill the educational demand of the children. Better income level of parents means better choices of schools, books and better learning environment at home.

The findings of this study align with Noddings' Theory of Care, which suggests that care and concern are essential for promoting student well-being and learning. Noddings (2013) argues that care is not only a moral responsibility, but also a necessary condition for learning to occur and also highlights the importance of parental care and concern in supporting children's education.

The interpretation of the final insight of the study along with literature and theories illustrated that despite the economic hardship of families, parental support and guidance could help alleviate the possible negative influence of poverty on children's education. Involved parents, with their care, love and attention, were likely to give them strength psychologically.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION, REFLECTION AND IMPLICATION

The final chapter of this research concludes the research journey by presenting the conclusion of the study followed by personal reflection of the entire research process. Then it concludes providing some implications and future direction.

#### **Conclusion**

The study intended to explore the role of parental involvement in the school children academic success. Based on my participants' stories and experiences, I have presented my insights and discussions in the previous chapter. Below is the conclusion derived from the above insights and discussions.

First and foremost, parental involvement is directly associated with children's academic success. When parents involve themselves in their children's learning environment, these children are likely to value their study. Engagement of parents despite any economic and educational barrier, enables students to improve their self-esteem. Consequently, students with highly involved parents had better academic performance provided that this motivates students in school retention and attendance. When parents are involved in students' schooling by inquiring and supporting them with homework, making necessary arrangements for learning environment at home and attending school events help the students to do well in their performance. In contrast, children with little parental involvement succeed less academically as the chances of deviation from their study is plausible.

Secondly, regardless of the parents' ability to involve themselves in their children's learning, shaping a child's mindset towards education through better care and nurture can leave a lasting impression and motivates them to perform better in school. At times, even when parents are unable to engage themselves in their children's school education directly, the care shown by parents can work as a catalyst in making students understand their study related role and responsibilities. Words of encouragement despite economic hardships, bestowing trust and respect and optimism of future, showing interest in their learning and listening to their issues make students feel that they are cared; as a result, they develop positive view towards their parents and family and an attitude to better in education is fostered.

Next, as in all the aspects of learning, effective communication between parents and children plays a crucial role in promoting academic success and vice-versa. The academic achievement of students is considerably improved by regular parent-child dialogue. Increasing the frequency of conversation between parents and children concerning school, assignments and other related issues affect self-concept of these students. Academic performance of these children is improved when parents interact with them in a way that demonstrates their understanding and trust of them.

Finally, this research indicated that in the context of low-income families, the socio-economic status of the parents and the learning environment at home are secondary to the care and concern provided by the parents. This is to say that despite the low socio-economic status, parents can foster a learning environment through their engagement, care and communication. In other words, link between socio-economic status of parent and academic achievement was not established and the former did not play substantial role in the educational achievement of students.

### **Reflections**

I was motivated to pursue the M.Phil in Educational Leadership program as a means to expand my knowledge and skills in leadership within educational institutions. Being involved in the education sector for more than a decade, I was planning to join KUSOED from February 2018's intake but I missed the admission notice as my mother was admitted in hospital for a month. I was fully prepared to join this program from February 2019's intake and was regular in touch with the reception office this time.

My initial experience in the program was positive, as the new learning environment provided both challenges and opportunities for growth. The classroom environment at KU was particularly noteworthy for its integrating different perspectives and ideas from classmates and coursework. Collaboration, a spirit of curiosity, and exposure to diverse pedagogical approaches all contributed to this experience. However, as I began to delve deeper into my research topic, I found myself feeling overwhelmed. My initial research topic was broad, focusing on family support, and I had limited knowledge of research methodology. I eventually narrowed my focus to an exploration of parental involvement in Nepal.

The second semester of my program proved to be a valuable learning experience, as I gained knowledge of various dimensions of research methodology. Of particular interest to me was qualitative research methodology. As a part of my

assignment, I presented my proposal and received valuable feedback from my teachers, which helped me to understand the potential challenges in obtaining substantial data for my proposed topic. They suggested that I examine the specific stories of students' family support and use a narrative method in my research. In a way, the entire semester was focused on developing the topic into a research proposal.

After finalizing my research topic, I started preparing to make a research proposal so that I can defend it by the start of my third semester. I spent a substantial amount of time researching in the library, reviewing dissertations and articles that pertained to family support. This dedication helped me to gain a deeper understanding of the topic. Although I did not find any studies that specifically examined family support, I did come across other dissertations that provided me with valuable insight. It was a challenging task as it was the first time I had undertaken such a rigorous assignment. The most challenging aspect was finding an appropriate theory to explain the role of family support in students' educational attainment. I reviewed a variety of theories found in other research studies, as well as books and articles on other social sciences theories. I revisited various learning and motivation theories, and ultimately determined that Epstein's Framework was the best fit for my research, as it provided a comprehensive understanding of how family support relates to educational attainment for children.

With the goal of completing my thesis within the third semester, I crafted a proposal for final assessment and successfully defended it in February 2020. I then began to implement the feedback provided by the research committee and narrowed down my research topic to parental involvement in public school children rather than family support. I believed that the research journey was on a smooth path and soon realized that selecting participants was my next step. I had also contacted specific schools in Kathmandu and Lalitpur. Unfortunately, shortly after my proposal defense, Nepal, like many other countries around the world, was imposed lockdown due to Covid-19 pandemic. This resulted in one of the greatest disruptions in my academic endeavours.

The two sequential nationwide lockdowns imposed by the government of Nepal due to Covid-19 pandemic made a very difficult situation in conducting my research during that period. The priority during the time was survival rather than studying or research. Additionally, the pandemic resulted in a disconnection from my thesis supervisor, making it difficult to receive guidance and support during this time.

To overcome these challenges, I decided to focus on secondary school students and consulted with other teachers and educational leaders to meet my participants virtually. Despite the complications, I was able to conduct interview with one of my participants through Zoom. However, I found that the online interviews lacked the personal connection that in-person interviews would have provided. So, after second lockdown was over, I started selecting my participants again as my previous participants already started their college lives by then. I conducted multiple interviews with my participants, both formally and informally. Once I felt that I had gathered enough information, I ended the meetings. The narratives were recorded and listened to multiple times. Each participant had a distinct story about their families and the level of parental involvement they experienced. I transcribed these stories and analyzed them looking for themes and connections. I also compared the information to relevant literature and theories to gain a deeper understanding.

In a nutshell, I spent about three years on this research work, which proved to be both challenging and fulfilling. It is said that without pushing oneself, growth cannot occur, and this surely holds true in my case. If I had not taken on the challenge of pursuing an MPhil degree, I would not have had the opportunity to participate in such an in-depth research endeavor. Additionally, if I had not delved into this research topic that had been on my mind for so long, I would not have been able to generate new knowledge that can contribute to the field of parental involvement literature.

### **Implications**

This study aimed to study parental involvement in school children's academic success who were studying in a public school as they were from a low SES family. The participants reflected on their parental involvement and their academic success throughout their schooling. The findings may be useful for parents, educators, trainers and policymakers.

#### **Implications for Parents**

First, the research findings have a lot of implications for parents who are inquisitive and want to know more about their contribution in their children's learning. The study emphasizes the importance of parental care and concern in promoting academic success in children, regardless of the family's socio-economic status. Parents may likely strive to provide a nurturing and supportive environment for their children and actively communicate with them about their education.



Additionally, parents may work to build a positive relationship with their child's school, and be involved in their child's education, to the best of their ability.

### **Implications for Educators and SMCs**

The study emphasizes the importance of effective communication between parents, schools, and children. Educators may make an effort to establish regular communication with the parents of their students and involve them in the education process. They may likely strive to create a supportive and nurturing learning environment in the classroom, and work to build positive relationships with students and their families.

### **Implications for Policymakers and Parental Training Providers**

The study suggests that in the context of low-income families, the socio-economic status of the parents and the learning environment at home are secondary to the care and concern provided by the parents. Policymakers may consider this when creating policies and programs related to education, particularly in low-income communities. They can focus on providing support for parents and families, such as parenting classes and family resource centers, rather than solely focusing on improving the socio-economic status of the community. Moreover, efforts like be made to enhance communication and co-operation among schools, families, and community organizations to support the academic success of all students.

### **Future Direction**

This study will be useful for School Management Committees, parents, teachers, and the authorities promoting parental involvement for students' learning.

It is recommended to conduct further studies in several aspects of parental involvement. The scope of my research was delimited to understanding the children's perspective, but future research could be done to explore the perspectives of parents and educators on what they consider parental involvement and how it should be implemented. Additionally, research could be conducted to examine how gender plays a role in parental involvement or to compare the involvement in different communities. My research contributes to the existing literature on parental involvement; but more studies are needed to continue exploring the subject of parental involvement.

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